THURSDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2019

SINCE 1845

THE STRAITS TIMES

Life Multicultural harmony D1

Sport World No.1s at Singapore Open C7

Top of the News Cancer patient's 4-year fight for justice A10

Top of the News Barramundi bonanza with farm extension A10

War clouds gather over Pakistan, India as other nations urge calm

Both sides claim success in air strikes; Islamabad says it has captured an Indian pilot

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

War clouds loomed over nuclear neighbours India and Pakistan, with fighter jets of the two nations engaging in aerial battle for the first time since they went to war in 1971.

Pakistan said it had launched air strikes and captured an Indian pilot, and both sides claimed to have downed each other's planes.

In a measure of how grim the situation was on the ground, Pakistan closed down its entire airspace and India shut down five airports, forcing carriers, including Singapore Airlines, to reroute flights. Ground troops from the two countries also exchanged fire for at least two hours.

With hostilities appearing to spiral out of control, the international community called for restraint, and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan offered dialogue.

He said in a televised statement: "If this (situation) escalates, it will no longer be in my control or in (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi's. We invite you for dialogue... better sense must prevail."

Meanwhile, India summoned Pakistan Deputy High Commissioner Syed Haider Shah and lodged a diplomatic protest over the air strikes.

The Ministry of External Affairs also asked for the safe return of the pilot, identified as Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman.

The sharp escalation in tensions comes after India launched air strikes on a camp belonging to the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) on Tuesday, claiming it was a preemptive strike on a group that was planning more terror attacks against it. JeM was involved in a suicide attack that killed 40 Indian paramilitary soldiers on Feb 14. India has accused Pakistan of having a direct role.

Both sides also claimed aerial success yesterday. Pakistan said Indian jets had entered Pakistani airspace and that its own air strike was to show it could retaliate. "The sole purpose of this action was to demonstrate our right, will and capability for self-defence. We do not wish to escalate, but are fully prepared if forced into that paradigm," said its Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

While Islamabad said it had targeted open spaces, India said Pakistan's jets had attacked its military installations.

Mr Raveesh Kumar, a spokesman for India's Ministry of External Affairs, said: "Due to our high state of readiness and alertness, Pakistan's attempts were foiled successfully."

He said Indian Air Force jets were scrambled as soon as the Pakistani planes were detected and that in the dogfight, a Pakistan Air Force fighter aircraft was shot down by a MiG-21 Bison of the Indian Air Force. "The Pakistani aircraft was seen by ground forces falling from the sky on the Pakistan side. In this engagement, we have, unfortunately, lost one MiG-21. "

The two countries have fought three wars and had one more limited conflict, and their relations remain tense.

Yesterday, countries around the world called for calm.

Singapore's Foreign Affairs Ministry said it noted the escalating of tensions with "deep concern", and called on both parties to ensure the safety of all civilians.

United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged the two nations "to avoid escalation at any cost", and for their foreign ministers to talk. He asked Pakistan to take "meaningful action against terrorist groups operating on its soil".

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said: "We hope India and Pakistan can exercise restraint, take initiatives that are conducive to promoting dialogue, meet halfway and make active efforts for lasting peace and stability in South Asia."

In a joint statement, 21 opposition parties in India also voiced their discomfort: "The leaders condemned the Pakistani misadventure and expressed deep concern for the safety of the missing pilot."

gnirmala@sph.com.sg

READ MORE Editorial, analyses and reports: SEE TOP OF THE NEWS **A6**, OPINION **A24&25**

Trump, Kim reunite for dinner and chat

US President Donald Trump has expressed hopes for a "very successful" summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, as they shared dinner together in Vietnam's capital city Hanoi yesterday.

Their dinner and one-to-one chat, held at a colonial hotel in the heart of Hanoi, lasted more than two hours.

"It is great to be with you," said Mr Trump, adding that their two countries have made a lot of progress since their first meeting in Singapore last June.

He promised a "tremendous future" and unlimited economic potential for North Korea, adding that he will help to make it happen.

Mr Kim, in return, praised Mr Trump's "courageous decision" to initiate the second summit, and said he would do his best to produce a "great outcome".

Talks between them continue today.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS **A8&9**

92 PAGES IN SIX PARTS
$1.10
To subscribe: 6388-3838
sphsubscription.com.sg
A Singapore Press Holdings publication
MCI (P) 069/01/2019★★

US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Flexibility in manpower for healthcare

The Government will provide "manpower flexibilities" to healthcare providers to ensure that their operations are not affected by the latest foreign worker quota cuts.

Minister of State for Manpower Zaqy Mohamad said in Parliament yesterday that the authorities recognise the need for essential services, such as healthcare, to continue running normally while firms adjust to the impending cuts in the Dependency Ratio Ceiling.

The lower ceiling, which sets the proportion of foreigners on work permits or S Passes that a company can employ, will take place over two phases, in 2020 and 2021.

A total of 25 MPs, including office-holders, spoke in yesterday's Budget debate. Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will respond to their comments when he rounds up this year's Budget today.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS **A4**, HOME **B4-6**

10 must-reads for today

1 Voter turnout concerns
With less than two months before the April 17 presidential and legislative polls, Indonesia is again forced to confront a rising trend of voter abstentions and its impact on the elections.

Research firm Lingkaran Survei Indonesia said at the release of its latest survey last Saturday that around 30 per cent of respondents are planning to abstain come polling day. WORLD A13

An electoral commission worker sorting ballot papers for Indonesia's April 17 general elections. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

What it should have been

Our headline yesterday "CGH and doc found guilty of negligence in cancer diagnosis" was wrong. While the patient succeeded in her claim against Changi General Hospital, she failed in her claim against Dr Imran Mohamed Noor. Although the Court of Appeal said that Dr Imran had breached his duty of care for failing to schedule a follow-up appointment for the patient, it ultimately did not find him liable for negligence as the patient did not have lung cancer when she saw Dr Imran in 2007.

We are sorry for the error.

2 Air strikes escalate conflict
War clouds loomed over nuclear neighbours India and Pakistan, with fighter jets of the two countries engaging in an aerial battle for the first time since they went to war in 1971. The international community has called for restraint, and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan offered dialogue. TOP OF THE NEWS A1

3 Water woes in Johor
Two Johor dams, Sungai Lebam and Lok Heng, have worryingly low water levels amid a prolonged dry spell in Malaysia, prompting officials to urge residents to use water sparingly. Singapore gets part of its water supply from the Linggiu reservoir, which is separate from the two dams. WORLD A12

4 Court to decide party's fate
Thailand's Constitutional Court has said there is sufficient evidence to decide whether a political party that named King Maha Vajiralongkorn's sister as a prime minister candidate should be dissolved. The court will make its decision on March 7. WORLD A18

5 Road to cleaner transport
Despite the outcry over rising costs, the raising of diesel duty puts Singapore on course for a healthier, more liveable environment. Health costs matter too in decisions on fuel tariffs, says senior transport correspondent Christopher Tan (below). OPINION A24

6 Doctor jailed for 10 years
General practitioner Wee Teong Boo was jailed for 10 years for sexually assaulting and molesting a patient. HOME B2

7 Accessible cancer care
Cancer detection, prevention and treatment will soon be more accessible to patients in need under a new partnership between the National Cancer Centre Singapore and the Singapore Cancer Society. HOME B3

8 Bombardier investing $85m
Canadian aerospace firm Bombardier is quadrupling the size of its Singapore service centre as part of efforts to enhance its position in the Asia-Pacific region, at a cost of $85 million. BUSINESS C1

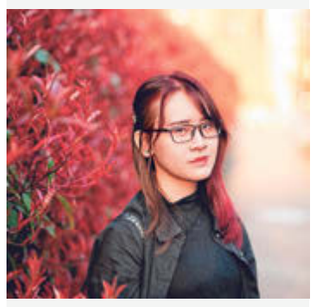
9 MHA reminder to SPL clubs
The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has reminded Singapore Premier League (SPL) football clubs holding permits to operate jackpot machines to remain vigilant in their operations, following a fund misappropriation case at Hougang United. SPORT C8

10 Singer to help with probe
South Korean singer Seungri expressed his willingness yesterday to cooperate fully with the police investigation into the allegations surrounding him – ranging from drug use at his Burning Sun club in Seoul to brokering prostitution. LIFE D20

Straits Times Digital

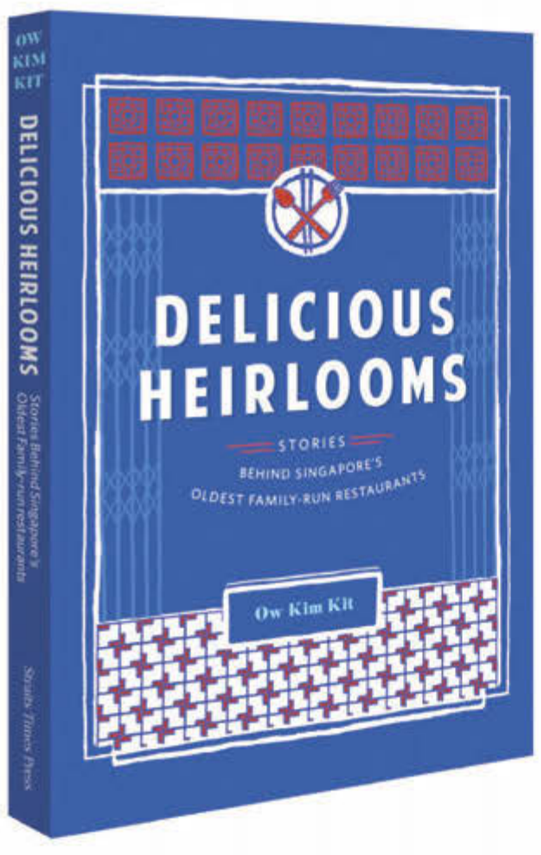
REACH US AT
Website: **www.straitstimes.com**
Facebook: **www.fb.com/thestraitstimes**
Twitter: **@STcom**
Instagram: **@Straits_Times**
Also follow us on **Telegram**

VIDEO
Vietnam plays host to summit
Hanoi is on high alert, with tens of thousands of policemen and soldiers deployed, as it plays host to the Trump-Kim summit. Locals are hopeful the meeting will bring about lasting peace in the world.
http://str.sg/tk-summit



VIDEO
Teen faces flak for gripe
A Facebook post by a 19-year-old girl on her travel experiences has sparked a debate on whether her sentiments reflect those of her generation. Find out more about the case and see where you stand.
http://str.sg/teengripe

LEARN THE SECRETS BEHIND THESE GREAT DISHES



MEET THE AUTHOR
OW KIM KIT

DATE
2 March 2019, Saturday

TIME
2:30 - 3:30pm

VENUE
Times Paragon,
290 Orchard Rd, #04-06/07

Straits Times Press
Available at all major book stores and at stbooks.sg

MELBOURNE PROPERTY EXPO

In Singapore
Today, Fri, Sat & Sun
(Feb 28 - Mar 3) 10am to 7pm
Conrad Centennial Hotel,
2 Temasek Blvd

Buy Direct from Australian Developer!
✔ APPROVED FOR OVERSEAS BUYERS ✔ FREEHOLD TITLE

NEW APARTMENT RELEASE!

MELBOURNE GRAND
LONSDALE
· COLLECTION ·

1, 2 & 3 Beds from A$489,000*

PRIME CITY CENTRE LOCATION
Walk to Queen Victoria Market, Flagstaff Gardens, Bourke St Mall, Southern Cross Station, cafés & trams.
Easy access to Melbourne University & RMIT.

Exclusive residents' facilities: Indoor heated pool, gym, sauna, yoga room, banquet room, theatre, coffee lounge, residents' lounge & dining, outdoor terrace with BBQ, 24/7 concierge & more.

Studying in Melbourne in 2019?
Limited number of new apartments close to major universities completing soon - For sale and rent!

Plus: Brand New Melbourne Landed Property from A$468,000*

PLUS: FREE 45-MINUTE MELBOURNE PROPERTY INFO SESSIONS
Hear what is happening in the Melbourne property market

- How foreigners can purchase Melbourne freehold property, pre-approved by the Australian Govt.
- Why so many international students choose to live and study in Melbourne.
- How to buy with just 10% initial deposit and fixed price contract.
- Learn about 'One-stop-shop' property management services.

BOOK: 6835 0778 australianpropertyshow.com

CENTRAL EQUITY 30+ YEARS SINCE 1987
AWARD WINNING AUSTRALIAN PROPERTY DEVELOPER
OVER 75 PROJECTS DELIVERED AS PROMISED

DISCLAIMER: This is an overseas investment. As overseas investments carry additional financial, regulatory and legal risks, investors are advised to do the necessary checks and research on the investment beforehand.
*Prices as at 21/2/2019 until sold. Planning permit: 201532884

ROLEX

This watch is a witness to golf's greatest competitions.
It doesn't just tell time. It tells history.

OYSTER PERPETUAL DATEJUST 36

HSBC Women's World Championship

HSBC WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
SENTOSA GOLF CLUB, SINGAPORE
28 FEBRUARY TO 3 MARCH 2019

Budget 2019 debate

Healthcare providers to get manpower flexibility

Their operations won't be disrupted because of foreign worker quota cuts: Zaqy

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

The operations of essential services, like healthcare, will not be affected by cuts in the foreign worker quotas in the service sector, Minister of State for Manpower Zaqy Mohamad said in Parliament yesterday.

The Manpower and Health ministries will work together to ensure healthcare providers are given "manpower flexibilities" so that there is no disruption in their day-to-day operations, Mr Zaqy added, without elaborating.

The lower quota, which sets the proportion of foreigners on work permits or the S Pass that a company can employ, will take effect in 2020 and 2021.

But the move, announced last week during the unveiling of the 2019 Budget, has generated controversy, with at least two MPs questioning the decision yesterday.

Ms Joan Pereira (Tanjong Pagar GRC) said she felt uncertain about the cuts as they would impact the labour-intensive caregiving sector.

"These manpower reductions will have a major impact on our elderly – the very group of Pioneer Generation and the Merdeka Generation seniors whom we want to help age with dignity," said Ms Pereira, who called for a review of the foreign worker quota policy.

Ms Lee Bee Wah (Nee Soon GRC) suggested having the policy kick in for new workers only, and letting businesses retain existing foreign workers who would have gained experience and skills by working in their companies.

"They have invested a lot in training their current workers, and it would be a waste to send them back," said Ms Lee.

The previous day, Nominated MP Douglas Foo also urged the Government to be more flexible in implementing the cuts by taking into account the needs of individual businesses in the service industry, as the move will raise labour costs.

Mr Zaqy, responding to Mr Foo, said that depending on the companies' restructuring plans, the Government could calibrate the extent of transitional manpower support to help them cope with the changes.

"We will work closely with the industry, to support businesses in developing more efficient techniques and service models, so that they can grow and transform in a tight labour market," he added.

Since 2012, the Health Ministry has rolled out more than 250 productivity projects for about 70 public healthcare and community care organisations.

Mr Zaqy, explaining the rationale for the quota cuts, said the Government decided against raising worker levies, which would directly raise costs for companies sticking to their existing business models.

But a lower Dependency Ratio Ceiling would give companies a choice: To hire more Singaporeans or transform their business into a leaner organisation.

Whichever option they pick, there are various government schemes to support them, he said, adding that the outcome must be a win-win for workers and employers.

Mr Zaqy also acknowledged that access to foreigners is crucial for businesses to stay competitive, especially if these workers have experience in emerging growth areas or have skills that are in short supply in Singapore.

But he cautioned against becoming over-reliant on foreign manpower, which was the reason the Government had earlier adjusted the Employment Pass (EP) requirements and will continue to do so as Singaporean wages rise, he added.

In 2017, the EP qualifying monthly salary was raised from $3,300 to $3,600 to keep pace with local wages. The change led to a 3 per cent drop in the number of EP holders, with lower-quality professionals leaving Singapore.

Mr Zaqy stressed that job redesign was key in helping all industries – including the service sector – cope with manpower shortages, and uplifting the Singaporean workforce.

Noting that most locals are employed in the service sector, including food and retail, he said: "We should avoid reinforcing the view that these are jobs that only foreigners want to take up."

ngjunsen@sph.com.sg

JOB REDESIGN IS KEY

The majority of locals are employed in the service sector, including in food services and retail jobs... We should avoid reinforcing the view that these are jobs that only foreigners want to take up.

MINISTER OF STATE FOR MANPOWER ZAQY MOHAMAD

Ms Joan Pereira (Tanjong Pagar GRC) voiced concern over the impact of foreign worker quota cuts on the caregiving sector. The lower quota will take effect in 2020 and 2021. ST FILE PHOTO

Sylvia Lim seeks better ways to measure underemployment

Seow Bei Yi
Business Correspondent

Official data indicates that the less educated in Singapore tend to be more prone to underemployment, a finding that led Workers' Party chairman Sylvia Lim to call on the Government to study the economic phenomenon more thoroughly, and monitor its effects on society.

Referring to Ministry of Manpower (MOM) figures, she noted that underemployment for university graduates is 2.3 per cent, which is lower than the overall rate of 3.3 per cent. But for those with just secondary education, it rises to nearly 4 per cent.

It grows further to 5 per cent for those without secondary education, she said in Parliament yesterday, the second day of the Budget debate.

"The rate was derived by a time-based definition of underemployment... persons working part-time and would like to work full-time," said Ms Lim (Aljunied GRC), referring to the underemployed group – people working below capacity.

"Even by MOM's measure, the 3.3 per cent translates into nearly 73,000 workers," she added. Citing the breakdown for those of different education levels, she said: "This may suggest that there may be a class dimension... with the less educated more prone to underemployment."

She asked the Government to continue improving the way underemployment is measured and monitor its effects on different segments of society. She also noted that the underemployed face challenges, such as being underpaid, feeling insecure about their income and lacking finances for daily expenses.

Citing a 2017 study by the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute, she noted that it yielded an underemployment rate of 4.3 per cent, which is higher than MOM's 3.3 per cent as at June last year.

The institute's survey adopted a multi-factor definition of underemployment and looked at those with university degrees and higher qualifications earning below $2,000 a month in a full-time job.

This state of vulnerability requires monitoring amid growing upheavals from job disruption.

Noting efforts to respond to such job disruption, with initiatives like Professional Conversion Programmes that help workers move into new roles, Ms Lim said the message that workers need to adapt is clear. She added: "The question is how well such initiatives are serving to give economic security to workers."

For instance, of the more than 76,000 job seekers who found employment through the Adapt and Grow Initiative from 2016 to last year, it would be useful to know if those who switched industries had comparable remuneration or took pay cuts.

STUDY THE IMPACT

The question is how well such initiatives are serving to give economic security to workers.

WORKERS' PARTY CHAIRMAN SYLVIA LIM, on the effectiveness of reskilling programmes in helping workers who are affected by job disruptions.

Ms Lim also called for more support for vulnerable workers, like those in the gig economy.

With some needing flexibility of time to attend to family issues, and others finding it hard to take time off work to attend to personal matters, she suggested that they be allowed instalment payments for composition fines – so their cases do not go to court when they have trouble making payments.

"The direction of the Government in economic transformation and workforce reskilling... is necessary," she said. But, she added: "The other pillar that is equally necessary is to have compensatory policies in the form of social safety nets, to cushion citizens who face disruption."

Yesterday, Ms Lee Bee Wah (Nee Soon GRC) also called for a relook at policies surrounding another group of workers – seniors facing re-employment.

She cited feedback that some were "forced to leave their company upon reaching retirement age" despite still being productive.

In another case, a worker was told to take a 40 per cent pay cut on re-employment, on top of added responsibilities.

"He was referred to the Tripartite Guidelines on the Re-employment of Older Employees, which stated that wages can be adjusted to the mid-point of the salary range," she said.

"I understand that re-employment might not be at the same salary, but to suffer a 40 per cent pay cut for an additional job scope, that is too much."

byseow@sph.com.sg

Bicentennial CPF top-up a tribute to women, says Josephine Teo

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

The Bicentennial Bonus CPF top-up is a "tribute" to women who stayed home to care for their families while others went out to work, Manpower Minister Josephine Teo said yesterday.

"It recognises that they had fewer years to build up their retirement savings," she pointed out in a speech that honoured women who contributed to Singapore's development.

"We don't usually apply the gender lens when debating our Budget, but when we do, it is clear that every Budget benefits women in significant ways. And they all add up to a lot of support," she added.

Last week, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat announced that Singaporeans aged 50 to 64 this year with less than $60,000 of retirement savings in their Central Provident Fund (CPF) accounts will receive a top-up of up to $1,000.

About 300,000 Singaporeans will gain from the top-up, six in 10 of whom are women in their 50s and 60s. Mrs Teo said the money will go some way in supporting these women in their old age.

"Even today, when women have more choices, many dedicate their lives to their families by staying home to personally take care of their needs," said Mrs Teo. "We don't say it often enough, but their sacrifices did not just make a difference to their families – they also made a difference to our nation-building."

Ms Rahayu Mahzam (Jurong GRC) and Ms Lee Bee Wah (Nee Soon GRC) also highlighted the contributions of women to Singapore.

Ms Rahayu said there are many women activists and volunteers who have "defied traditional expectations and made great strides to change society's preconceived notions and habits".

But she noted that there is still much to do in Singapore when it comes to issues such as closing the wage gap between men and women, or supporting women who return to the workforce after having children.

"While women here have access to education and jobs, and we have representation of women in many key positions in leadership, there is still much that we can do," said Ms Rahayu.

Ms Lee reiterated Mrs Teo's point on how the CPF top-ups will help this group achieve retirement adequacy, and urged families to top up their mothers' and wives' accounts.

"You will get a tax relief of up to $7,000 for doing this. But more importantly, it is to show her how much you appreciate her sacrifices," Ms Lee said.

Mrs Teo noted that many government schemes targeted at the elderly benefit women more since their life expectancies are longer.

These include the Pioneer Generation Package and the Silver Support Scheme for needy seniors. More than 65 per cent of those who receive Silver Support payouts are women, she said.

In her speech, Mrs Teo also held up women who contributed to Singapore throughout its long history.

They include Hajjah Fatimah, who arrived in Singapore in the 1800s and built houses and a mosque, as well as fungi expert Gloria Lim, who was the first woman to be appointed dean of the science faculty of the then University of Singapore, the predecessor of the National University of Singapore.

"Our women pioneers set solid foundations for the generations after them so that we can all advance and progress in society," she said.

linettel@sph.com.sg

WOMEN BENEFIT SIGNIFICANTLY

We don't usually apply the gender lens when debating our Budget, but when we do, it is clear that every Budget benefits women in significant ways.

MANPOWER MINISTER JOSEPHINE TEO, on how the Bicentennial Bonus CPF top-up recognises women who stayed home to care for their families and had fewer years to build up retirement savings.

© Inter IKEA Systems B.V. 2019

I'm full of ideas and love to be playful.

The IKEA® Extra catalogue. Extra fun in the bedroom.

Check your mailbox or visit your nearest IKEA® store for a copy today.

IKEA®

Pakistani soldiers standing next to what Pakistan says is the wreckage of an Indian fighter jet shot down in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir yesterday. Tensions between Pakistan and India are at an all-time high since 2001, resulting in tit-for-tat air strikes. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

News analysis

India, Pakistan headed to war? Situation is fluid, say analysts

Tensions at highest since 2001, but conflict would hurt both sides

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

The last time tensions between India and Pakistan peaked in 2001, the two countries managed to step back from war. And while analysts say that could happen again this time, the situation could just as easily spiral out of control.

Former Indian foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh said this was the biggest outbreak of hostilities between India and Pakistan after the Parliament attack 18 years ago, in which 14 people, including five terrorists, were killed in an attack on the Parliament of India.

"This is the first time after 2001 that tensions have gone up (in this manner). At that time (in 2001), there was high mobilisation of troops along the border, and it went on for almost a year," he said.

He added that tensions had not risen to this level in 2016, even when there were two terror attacks.

Two years ago, terrorists attacked an Indian Air Force base in Pathankot, near the border with Pakistan, killing seven security personnel. The same year saw an attack on an Indian Army base in Uri, in Kashmir, in which 19 soldiers were killed, that New Delhi blamed on Islamabad.

Mr Mansingh said: "Uri and Pathankot created anger. Tensions normally rise when you have an audacious terror attack."

India and Pakistan have fought three wars and a limited conflict over Kashmir, where India has blamed Pakistan for fuelling a separatist movement, and regularly exchange fire across the de facto border despite a ceasefire signed in 2003.

The wars took place in 1947 and 1965, and the limited conflict in 1999. The two countries also went to war in 1971 in a military confrontation between India and Pakistan that occurred during the liberation war in East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh.

Other observers note that while the two countries do have a history of conflict, the tit-for-tat air strikes this week are unprecedented.

Commodore (Retired) C. Uday Bhaskar, director of the Society for Policy Studies, said: "The situation is distinctive because of the use of air power for a terrorist-related incident – which we didn't do over the last two decades. But tensions have moved up a notch in the last 24 hours. We have a pilot in (Pakistani) custody. We have to see in the next few hours if diplomacy kicks in or if it goes to another level of hostilities and a limited military engagement takes place."

The current hostilities between India and Pakistan were triggered after a suicide bomber rammed a sport utility vehicle laden with 350kg of explosives into a bus carrying paramilitary soldiers belonging to the Central Reserve Police Force in Pulwama district, in Jammu and Kashmir, on Feb 14. Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) took credit for the attack in which 40 soldiers were killed, and India accused Pakistan of having a direct hand in the attack.

The attacks triggered widespread anger within the country and a demand for action against Pakistan, amid an upsurge of nationalistic fervour. In retaliation, India on Tuesday launched air strikes against a JeM terror camp in Pakistan, noting it had intelligence that suicide bombers were being trained to carry out attacks against India.

Pakistan maintained that India had hit open spaces and, yesterday, retaliated with its own air strikes. India said the attack had been on military installations.

While analysts said the situation remained fluid over whether the two countries would continue to escalate tensions to a war situation, or scale back from a war, they noted that an outbreak of war would be bad for both sides.

Pakistan is facing a financial crisis and awaiting a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while India is heading into elections.

Mr Mansingh said: "Pakistan is in a fragile state. If they start large-scale conflict, it would be bad for India. It would be worse for Pakistan. (Its) foreign exchange reserves are at rock bottom. It has applied for a bailout from IMF. It won't have an easy time.

"The complication (for India) is, we are going to have elections – you can't have a conflict situation and elections."

Dr Muhammad Babar Chohan, Additional Commissioner, Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue, wrote in an opinion piece in Pakistani newspaper Daily Times: "A sense of insecurity can adversely affect, and even occlude, the economic activities of a country because of rising capital flight, increasing transport costs and frequent investment postponements. Due to the prevailing uncertainty and fear, these factors directly affect the fiscal and monetary dimensions of an economy."

gnirmala@sph.com.sg

Propaganda war hots up amid tensions

Debarshi Dasgupta
India Correspondent
In New Delhi

Pakistan and India both claimed to have shot down each other's aircraft yesterday, as they sought to gain the upper hand in a propaganda war while tensions escalated over Kashmir.

Pakistan was first to claim it had shot down two Indian Air Force (IAF) jets, with a government spokesman saying that one of the aircraft had fallen inside Pakistani territory and two Indian pilots had been arrested.

He also said Pakistani aircraft had carried out strikes across the Line of Control in Indian-administered Kashmir. Pakistan's Information Ministry even tweeted a video of what it said was the "wreckage of Indian fighter planes burning".

"Well done Pakistan Air Force. The entire nation is proud of you," it added.

India soon countered by claiming it had foiled attempts by the Pakistan Air Force yesterday morning to target military installations on the Indian side. One Pakistan aircraft was shot down in this aerial exchange and the aircraft was seen by Indian ground forces falling on the Pakistani side, said the spokesman for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, who read out from a prepared statement and refused to take any questions. He said India had lost one aircraft and its pilot was "missing in action". The government is currently ascertaining Pakistan's claim that the pilot is in its custody.

These moves came in the wake of a cross-border strike carried out by India in the early hours of Tuesday, though the details of what exactly transpired in that strike remain unclear.

The Indian government has claimed its jets struck the "biggest training camp", in Balakot, Pakistan, of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the terrorist group which had claimed responsibility for an attack in Pulwama on Feb 14 that killed 40 Indian soldiers.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale added in a statement to the media on Tuesday that "a very large number of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders and groups of jihadis... were eliminated".

Pakistan continues to deny this, instead claiming that Indian aircraft released their payload "in haste while escaping", and caused no casualties or damage with the explosions.

Indian media has quoted the number of those killed to be as high as 350, a claim that has not been verified. Pakistani newspaper Dawn, on the other hand, interviewed locals from Balakot, who said they had heard explosions but denied any casualty.

Social media in India and Pakistan especially has been rife with rumour-mongering.

Alt News, an Indian fact-checking website, carried several reports debunking widely shared propaganda material on social media on both sides of the border since Tuesday. This included a gaming video excerpt doing the rounds online in India as one of the actual Indian strikes.

Indian media has also broadcast a September 2017 video of a fighter jet emitting flares which is available on YouTube, claiming it shows Indian aircraft involved in the strike.

Pakistani social media circulated a video of an Indian Air Force pilot injured in the Bangalore air show earlier this month which was touted as showing an Indian pilot captured in Pakistan.

As the fog of war thickens once again between these two South Asian rivals, truth, it seems, has become an early casualty.

debarshi@sph.com.sg

Defer non-essential travel: MFA

Singapore yesterday noted with deep concern the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, and called on both sides to ensure the safety of all civilians.

A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) advised Singaporeans to defer non-essential travel to Jammu and Kashmir in India, and to Pakistan. "Travellers should also exercise precaution in other areas, especially the border regions between Pakistan and India, given the uncertain security situation," it said.

Several cities, including New Delhi and Mumbai, and the border districts of Kutch, Banaskantha and Patan in Gujarat, have been placed on high alert.

The statement also noted reports of airport closures and flight cancellations in various Indian states, including Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. And in Pakistan, MFA said, the Civil Aviation Authority has closed its airspace to all commercial flights, and there have been reports of flight cancellations across Pakistan.

"Singaporeans who are already in India and Pakistan should take all necessary precautions to ensure their personal safety. They are advised to stay vigilant, monitor developments through the local news and heed the instructions of the local authorities," the statement said.

"Do stay in touch with your family and friends in Singapore so that they know you are safe," it added, and encouraged Singaporeans in these two countries to eRegister with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at https://eregister.mfa.gov.sg.

It added that those who require consular assistance can contact the Singapore High Commission in New Delhi on +91 11 4600-0800 and on +91 98102-03595, or through e-mail at singhc_del@mfa.sg.

In Pakistan, there is the Singapore Honorary Consulate-General in Karachi, which can be reached on +92 21 3568-6419 and on +92 21 3568-5308, or through e-mail at singaporecg@cyber.net.pk.

MFA also listed the Singapore phone numbers of its 24-hour MFA Duty Office: +65 6379-8800 and +65 6379-8855.

3 SIA flights to Europe stop to refuel after being re-routed

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent

Three Singapore Airlines (SIA) flights yesterday – two to London and one to Frankfurt, Germany – had to stop halfway for refuelling after the airline re-routed flights to Europe to avoid Pakistan airspace.

This was necessary as the decision to re-route added flying distance and time to the flights.

The refuelling was done in Mumbai and Dubai.

Confirming the diversions, SIA said that as a result of the delay to the Frankfurt flight, the return flight SQ325 was cancelled and the passengers were transferred to other airlines.

"All other flights that overfly the affected airspace will be re-routed, but are due to operate as scheduled at this point," the airline's spokesman said.

Pilots said this could add a few extra hours to flights.

The changes were made after India and Pakistan closed some of their airspace amid escalating tensions between the two countries.

The Straits Times understands that all Singapore-Europe flights, including those operated by other carriers such as Australia's Qantas, are affected.

While flights should depart Changi Airport on time, some delays are expected for flights arriving from Europe.

In a notice on its website, SIA said: "As the situation remains fluid, customers are advised to check the status of their flights on our website or contact their local SIA reservations office."

Customers are also advised to update their contact details here to receive updates on their flights.

SIA's budget arm Scoot also cancelled its flight to Amritsar in north India yesterday.

A Scoot spokesman who confirmed this said that the situation is fluid.

According to flight tracking website FlightRadar24, airlines are flying farther south over the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman and Persian Gulf to avoid Pakistan airspace.

SIA and Scoot are among many airlines affected by the airspace closure, which affects all services between South-east Asia and Europe.

Mr Albert Tjoeng, Asia spokesman for the International Air Transport Association, told The Straits Times that there are about 220 flights operating between this region and Europe every day.

"Alternative routes are available for the flights impacted by the closure of Pakistan airspace," he said.

karam@sph.com.sg

The crowd at an airport ticket counter in Jammu after flights were suspended following airspace closure by India and Pakistan yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Straits Construction
Higher Further Together

BUILDING BEYOND 50 1969 – 2019

At Straits Construction, we value our workers' safety, welfare and well-being as our TOP PRIORITY. At the cornerstone of our corporate culture, it is our mandate to help protect and preserve the safety and health of our workers. Safety leads us home to our families.

STRAITS CONSTRUCTION SINGAPORE PTE LTD IS PROUD TO

ACHIEVE THE BIZSAFE PARTNER AWARD 2019

Nexus International School (Singapore)

JTC Trendspace

Yishun N4C17

Rivercove Residences

Hundred Palms Residences

Sophia Hills

Straits Construction would like to express our appreciation to Partners, Clients, Developers, Consultants, Subcontractors and Suppliers for their support. We would also like to thank and commend our Staff and Workers for their efforts in realizing this achievement.

STRAITS CONSTRUCTION SINGAPORE PTE LTD 海峡建筑新加坡私人有限公司 • Co. Reg. No. 200803755R
16 Jalan Kilang #05-01 Hoi Hup Building Singapore 159416 • T +65 6222 6722 • F +65 6222 6033
www.straitsconstruction.com

Trump-Kim Hanoi summit

Leaders voice hopes for successful talks

Both countries have made much progress since first summit last June, says Trump

Tan Dawn Wei
China Bureau Chief
Chang May Choon
South Korea Correspondent
In Hanoi

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump at their dinner meeting at the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi yesterday. With them are (clockwise from far left) North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho; Mr Kim Yong Chol, vice-chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea; Mr Kim Jong Un's interpreter Sin Hye Yong; Mr Trump's interpreter Lee Yun-hyang; US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo; and Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney. The two leaders will continue their bilateral meeting today. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have voiced hopes for successful talks, as they sat down for their first dinner together in Vietnam last night.

They were reunited in a colonial hotel in the heart of capital city Hanoi, eight months after their first summit in Singapore.

Posing for the media in front of a row of flags, the two men exchanged smiles and a handshake, with quick pats on each other's arms.

Mr Trump said he was looking forward to a "very successful" summit.

"It is great to be with you. We had a very successful first summit," he told Mr Kim. "Some people wanted to see it go quicker, but I am satisfied, you are satisfied."

Mr Trump said that both countries have "made a lot of progress" since the first summit last June, during which they signed a four-point agreement to build new ties, establish a peace regime on the Korean peninsula, work towards complete denuclearisation and return war remains.

The biggest progress, he added, is that "our relationship is really a good one".

Mr Kim, in return, praised Mr Trump's "courageous decision" to initiate the second summit, and added that he would do his best to produce a "great outcome" that is welcomed by everyone.

The North Korean leader is seeking to break the deadlock that arose after the Singapore summit due to differences in the two countries' approach towards denuclearisation.

Washington has stood firm on maintaining pressure and sanctions until Pyongyang takes concrete action towards denuclearisation. Pyongyang, however, is pushing for corresponding measures such as economic concessions.

Mr Kim said "agonising effort and patience were needed more than ever before" in the past few months, but "we have been able to overcome all the obstacles and here we are today".

Mr Trump promised a "tremendous future" for North Korea, which he said has unlimited economic potential under "a great leader" like Mr Kim.

"I look forward to watching it happen and helping it to happen," added Mr Trump.

The two leaders were joined by close aides, including US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and vice-chairman of North Korea's ruling party Kim Yong Chol for their dinner and chat, which lasted more than two hours.

Hundreds of curious onlookers lined the streets leading to their dinner venue at the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, while plain-clothes policemen stood quietly among the crowds.

A few supporters held up signs reading: "Welcome President Donald Trump to Vietnam."

When The Straits Times spoke to one of the supporters, two men in uniform approached and moved them away, before asking the reporter for her passport and her notebook.

They questioned her and took a photograph of her notes before letting her go.

Bank executive Nguyen Huy Tung was waving a North Korea flag that his father had brought home from Pyongyang, where he had worked as an architect for five years.

"I am here to welcome both Chairman Kim and President Trump. The two leaders are very interesting and all of Vietnam is excited to be hosting this summit and very proud," said the 30-year-old.

The two leaders will continue their bilateral meeting today.

Mr Trump is expected to leave Hanoi this evening.

Mr Kim will stay on for meetings with the Vietnamese leadership tomorrow and on Saturday.

dawntan@sph.com.sg
changmc@sph.com.sg

Mr Kim said "agonising effort and patience were needed more than ever before" in the past few months, but "we have been able to overcome all the obstacles and here we are today". Mr Trump promised a "tremendous future" for North Korea, which he said has unlimited economic potential under "a great leader" like Mr Kim.

SCAN TO WATCH
Vietnamese food, free tours at media centre. http://str.sg/trumpkimmedia

Summit venue a colonial-era hotel with storied past

HANOI • A storied French colonial-era hotel once used by the North Vietnamese government to house foreign guests during the Vietnam War is hosting US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as they meet for a second summit.

The Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi has hosted dignitaries and celebrities from Charlie Chaplin on his honeymoon in 1936 to "Hanoi Jane" Fonda during her 1970s anti-war campaign, and even Mr Trump himself on a recent visit to the Vietnamese capital.

The Metropole could begin a new chapter as a symbol of peace if Mr Trump and Mr Kim – as some officials in Seoul and Washington expect – formally declare an end to the last remaining Cold War conflict after their two-day summit.

The United States and North Korea are technically still at war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce, not a peace treaty.

"We hope Trump and Kim make some progress with their denuclearisation and hopefully open North Korea to the outside world," said Dr Stephen Fries from Colorado, whose long-planned family trip was disrupted by preparations for the summit.

He was among two dozen Metropole guests touring an underground air raid bunker at the hotel used during the Vietnam War that was rediscovered by chance in 2011 while the hotel was renovating its poolside Bamboo bar.

"It is about time there is a deal. Vietnam had been our enemy, now they are kind of a friend. I hope North Korea would become exactly like Vietnam, and maybe use it as an example to follow for its own economic development," Dr Fries said.

The 118-year-old Metropole hosted Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt in 2007, but perhaps its most iconic guest is American actress Jane Fonda, who stayed for two weeks in 1972 when visiting then enemy territory. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

The elegant interior of the 118-year-old Metropole filled with security personnel and hotel staff on the summit eve as final preparations were made.

Nearby street corners were guarded by armed police, while security staff searched potted plants around the pool.

In a letter distributed ahead of the leaders' arrival, the hotel's general manager notified guests of the "very strict security measures" expected in the coming days.

All but one entrance to the hotel will be blocked during the summit and a temporary checkpoint has been installed to screen guests, who need to show copies of their passports to gain access to the hotel.

The hotel, decorated with US and North Korean flags, was locked down yesterday morning, with roads around it blocked and TV crews filming at barricades.

Mr Trump and Mr Kim likely chose Metropole for its ability to keep secrets, Mr Nguyen Dinh Thanh, former head of marketing at the hotel, told Reuters.

"When superstars come here, some journalists offer US$2,000 (S$2,700) to US$5,000 or more to staff to take a photo of that superstar, but that has never happened. That shows Metropole has a tradition of keeping secrets as well as knowing how to treat VIP guests," he said.

NOT IDEAL FOR SECURITY

Singapore chose an isolated island, and protection on such an island is much easier, definitely easier than Metropole.

MR LE VAN CUONG, who used to head the strategy institute of the Ministry of Public Security, on the hotel's location in the middle of bustling streets.

Heads of state from European kings and British royals to US and South American presidents have all chosen the Metropole as their Hanoi abode.

It attracted celebrities such as Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt in 2007, but perhaps its most iconic guest is American actress Jane Fonda, who stayed for two weeks in 1972 when visiting then enemy territory during the Vietnam War.

A controversial photo of her sitting with North Vietnamese troops atop an anti-aircraft gun used to shoot at American planes earned her the nickname "Hanoi Jane".

The Metropole also hosted Graham Greene, who wrote part of his seminal 1955 work, The Quiet American, there, and numerous war correspondents during the 20-year-long Vietnam War that ended in 1975.

Mr Trump, who stayed in the hotel on his last visit to Vietnam in 2017, has chosen the easier-to-secure JW Marriott hotel this time. Mr Kim is staying at the Melia Hanoi hotel.

Despite its long history of hosting VIPs, the Metropole is not an ideal summit venue from a security point of view, said Mr Le Van Cuong, who used to head the strategy institute of the Ministry of Public Security.

He said it sits right in the centre of crowded streets, making it difficult to ensure security. "Singapore chose an isolated island, and protection on such an island is much easier, definitely easier than Metropole," he added.

Mr Trump and Mr Kim held their first summit at Singapore's Capella hotel, a refurbished British Royal Artillery officers' mess on Sentosa.

REUTERS

SummitBriefs

China hopes summit will be successful

BEIJING • China hopes the upcoming second summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump will be successful, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Tuesday.

"All parties in the world, including China, hope (North Korea) and the US will continue to make more substantial progress on denuclearisation and peace and stability of the Korean peninsula, based on what they have achieved," spokesman Lu Kang said. XINHUA

PHOTO: REUTERS

Vietnam issues 300 commemorative coins

HANOI • Vietnam yesterday issued 300 coins made of pure silver to welcome the second summit between Mr Kim Jong Un and Mr Donald Trump.

One side bears images of a dove, an olive branch, national flags of North Korea and the US, and the words "World Peace", while the other side has an image of a lotus. The Vietnam Philately Company said each costs 500,000 Vietnamese dong (S$29). Vietnam also issued a set of postage stamps to welcome the summit. XINHUA

Trump-Kim Hanoi summit

News analysis

From foe to friend – Vietnam shows the way

US President Donald Trump waving a Vietnamese flag as he is greeted by students during a meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc (left, foreground) in Hanoi yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump driving home message that N. Korea could be the next Vietnam

Chang May Choon

South Korea Correspondent
In Hanoi

North Korea could be the next Vietnam – a foe turned friend of the United States that is now prospering after their ties were normalised.

Analysts said that is the message US President Donald Trump tried to drive home to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday – just hours before their scheduled dinner meeting.

While Mr Kim did not leave his hotel until dinner time, Mr Trump set off early to meet Vietnamese President Nguyen Phu Trong at the Presidential Palace, where they witnessed the signing of a trade deal worth more than US$20 billion (S$27 billion) involving US-made aircraft and travel software technology.

Thanking Mr Trong for agreeing to host the summit, Mr Trump said both he and Mr Kim "both felt very good about having this very important summit in Vietnam because you really are a good example of what can happen".

The US President then sat down for a working lunch with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

Vietnam is "thriving like few places on earth", and the same can happen very quickly for North Korea if it would give up nuclear weapons, Mr Trump said in a Twitter message yesterday.

"The potential is awesome, a great opportunity, like almost none other in history, for my friend Kim Jong Un. We will know fairly soon – very interesting," he wrote.

Experts said Mr Trump's intentions were clear – to persuade North Korea that economic prosperity will follow if it gives up nuclear weapons and works towards a peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

Mr Daniel Davis, a senior fellow and military expert at Washington-based think-tank Defence Priorities, said Mr Trump's moves were designed to show Mr Kim how the US and Vietnam "used to be enemies, but now we are making economic deals, and this could be your future as well".

Speaking at a forum held at the Korea Press Centre set up in Hanoi, Mr Davis also noted that Mr Trump, being a deal maker who would do whatever needs to be done to achieve his goal, was "not shy at all" about sending his message across to Mr Kim.

Meanwhile, the North Korean leader was holed up in the Melia Hanoi hotel – but for a reason.

Mr Trump's moves were designed to show Mr Kim how US and Vietnam "used to be enemies, but now we are making economic deals, and this could be your future as well".

It is to show how serious he is about his second summit with Mr Trump, Handong University professor Kim Joon-hyung told The Straits Times.

Prof Kim said this could be the "best or last chance" for the two leaders to hammer out a deal before Mr Trump enters the second half of his four-year presidency due to end in January 2021, and gets caught up in re-election plans.

"Big things could come out of this summit because there is not much time left," he added.

Prof Kim also pointed out that while the North Korean leader kept a low profile, he sent a delegation of officials out to visit a Vietnamese car factory in the coastal industrial town of Haiphong, and to check out Halong Bay, a tourist attraction.

"That is meaningful too," said Prof Kim.

Dr Paik Hak-soon, president of the Sejong Institute think-tank, said there is no question that North Korea is "serious about learning from the Vietnam model".

Vietnam's economy grew rapidly after it normalised relations with the US in 1995 – 20 years after the Vietnam War ended.

Bilateral trade between the two countries ballooned from US$451 million in 1995 to US$54 billion last year.

"Kim Jong Un's vision is to open up a better life for his people and a better future for his state," said Dr Paik. "North Korea benefiting from the Vietnam model will be a topic of discussion during the summit talks."

changmc@sph.com.sg

Vindication for cancer patient after four-year legal battle

Ms Noor Azlin Abdul Rahman with her mother Azizah Yahya, 73. The Court of Appeal ruled in Ms Noor Azlin's favour on Tuesday and found Changi General Hospital negligent in not diagnosing her cancer in its early stage. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

She hopes victory against CGH will bring about change and save lives

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

Ms Noor Azlin Abdul Rahman, 39, has spent the last seven years fighting a cancer that has become terminal, and the last four waging another battle. She was suing a public hospital and three doctors she had accused of not detecting her cancer earlier.

When the legal proceedings started in January 2015, she was working full time and earning $4,000 a month. By the time the High Court dismissed her case in February last year, she had chalked up legal bills in excess of $1 million.

Despite the mounting debts, and having to care for ageing parents as the highest earner among six siblings, she still decided to appeal against the High Court decision – and won.

On Tuesday, the Court of Appeal ruled in Ms Noor Azlin's favour and told Changi General Hospital (CGH) "to consider the possibility of a settlement in the interests of expediency and resolution".

The Court of Appeal dismissed her claims against the doctors. Of the two who saw her in the hospital's accident and emergency (A&E) department, the court said neither breached their duty of care to her.

As for respiratory specialist Imran Mohamed Noor, whom she was referred to in 2007, the court said he did breach his duty when he did not schedule a follow-up appointment when he was unsure what caused the opacity in an X-ray of her lungs. But the court said Dr Imran was not liable for negligence as she did not have cancer when she saw him in 2007.

It did find the hospital negligent after Ms Noor Azlin's cancer was not diagnosed following more visits to the A&E department. If it had been diagnosed early, it is unlikely that she would be suffering from Stage IV cancer today.

On her determination to keep fighting, she told The Straits Times: "I really had to. And I don't want the same thing to happen to anyone else. I am sad it has happened to me, but I hope this can change the system so more lives can be saved."

When the High Court dismissed her case, she cried even though she said she had "kind of expected it".

Despite that, Ms Noor Azlin decided to "fight to the very end" because "I had faith in God and the justice system".

Now, she feels vindicated.

Although her cancer had spread and was at Stage IV by October 2016, she has been trying to live life as best she can, giving meaning to it.

Since her diagnosis, her priorities have changed. Previously, she would be thinking of where to go for her next trip or buying new clothes. Now, she spends her time and energy helping other cancer patients, especially those in the late stages.

She remembers how depressed she felt when she was first diagnosed. A local cancer group did not heed her cry for help because it was supporting patients with a different kind of cancer.

What help she got came from a cancer support group in the United States. So, she decided: "Nobody needs to fight cancer alone, not while I am alive."

She took a two-month part-time counselling course so she could better help other patients. While she feels that helping others gives meaning to her life, Ms Noor Azlin, a divorcee, said: "My heart breaks each time one of them passes away."

And many of them have done so.

She sees herself as "living on borrowed time". To keep her spirits up, she tries to talk to a new person every day, be it a taxi driver or another patient in the waiting room.

She said that her quality of life has suffered due to the treatment she is getting. It no longer entices her even when her 81-year-old father cooks her favourite mutton briyani. "Any food or drink I take tastes bitter," she said.

She continues working at her job in the corporate secretariat sector, helping new companies set up offices. Iyer Practice Advisers, where she works, allows her to work part-time so she can continue with her treatment. She gets $22 an hour.

She is very grateful to her lawyer, Mr Vijay Kumar Rai of Engelin Teh Practice, who did not give up on her despite the fees she owes him and the fact that the case stretched on for years. Ms Noor Azlin has already paid more than $50,000 for her legal battle.

But as her cancer worsened, she needed the money for treatment. Not all of it was payable with insurance, Medisave or MediFund as she was on new drugs.

Oncologists at the National Cancer Centre Singapore also put her on clinical trials to take advantage of drugs yet to be generally used. Being on a trial meant free care.

Mr Rai said that he believed in her case and could not leave her in the lurch. He said: "The poor should be entitled to vindication too, not just the rich."

salma@sph.com.sg

Appeal Court ruled CGH negligent in diagnosing cancer; doctors not negligent

On Tuesday, the Court of Appeal ruled that Changi General Hospital (CGH) had been negligent in not putting in place a system that ensures proper follow-up of radiological results and managing patients.

This caused a delay in the diagnosis of Ms Noor Azlin Abdul Rahman's lung cancer, the Court of Appeal said.

She had sued CGH as well as three doctors for negligence – two from CGH's Accident & Emergency Department who had seen her in 2010 and 2011, as well as respiratory specialist Dr Imran Mohamed Noor, whom she had been referred to in 2007 after she visited the A&E.

While the Court of Appeal found CGH liable for negligence, all three doctors were exonerated and found not liable for negligence.

Of Dr Imran, it said that while he had not scheduled a follow-up appointment for Ms Noor Azlin, Dr Imran was ultimately not liable for negligence as she did not have lung cancer when she saw him in 2007.

Yesterday, Dr Imran said: "I hope that the Court of Appeal's decision will help Ms Azlin find closure. I sincerely wish her the best. On my part, I am relieved that the Court of Appeal has found that I am not liable."

Workers at Barramundi Asia's sea cage farm harvesting barramundi. With the $2 million extension to its nursery on Pulau Semakau, the farm expects its fish production to rise threefold, bringing its expected yield to 6,000 tonnes of fish yearly – more than what was produced by Singapore's 120 fish farms last year. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

S'pore barramundi farm eyes bumper catch with $2m nursery extension

Cheryl Teh

Local barramundi farm Barramundi Asia has scaled up its operations with a new $2 million extension to its nursery.

With this extension, the farm expects to increase its fish production threefold, to almost 1.8 million fish fry per year. That will bring the farm's expected yield to 6,000 tonnes of fish yearly, which is more than what Singapore's 120 fish farms produced last year.

The nursery, located in the south of Singapore on Pulau Semakau, now has 1,200 sq m more space and the addition of eight giant 50 cubic m tanks.

This extra space for rearing fingerlings will raise the farm's production capacity to 150,000 fish a month, up from its previous capacity of 50,000 fish monthly.

Singapore imports more than 90 per cent of the food consumed in the country, according to figures from the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA).

But last year, only 9 per cent of all the fish eaten in Singapore was produced locally.

The farm hopes that this extension will produce more barramundi, which is called *jin mu lu* in Chinese or *ikan siakap* in Malay, and is a popular fish on the menu in seafood restaurants.

The new extension to the fish farm's nursery was unveiled by Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Masagos Zulkifli yesterday. "As a city-state that imports more than 90 per cent of our food, Singapore is vulnerable to external shocks and developments that impact food supply," he said at the official opening on Pulau Semakau.

He added that to enhance Singapore's domestic food security, three strategies should be pursued: Diversify import sources, grow local and grow overseas.

"Growing local will help us reduce our dependence on imports," he said, adding that local farms can harness the latest technologies to overcome resource constraints.

He also said farms can tap the AVA's Agriculture Productivity Fund to co-fund technology that could boost farm productivity.

Barramundi Asia is one such beneficiary, where bits and bytes are very much part of the production chain.

The new extension sees the farm having the largest commercially run recirculating aquaculture system.

With this system, water from the fish tanks will be treated and then recirculated. Compared with simple filtration systems, this not only saves water, but also allows for tighter control over its quality.

Other machines on the farm include a semi-automated fish grading machine, which sorts fish according to their size, a process previously done completely by hand.

There is also an expanded hatchery, which will allow the farm to be fully self-sufficient, from production to distribution.

By hatching its own fry, the company, which is Singapore's largest producer of sustainable, fresh barramundi, will be able to control the fish's entire life cycle – from egg to farm, and finally to fork.

As part of this production chain, a barramundi at the farm will be born at the hatchery, grown in the nursery and be transported to the sea cage farm, where it can grow to full size. It will then be processed and marketed under the company's brand, Kuhlbarra.

Mr Joep Klein Staarman, co-founder and managing director of Barramundi Asia, said: "The extension of the nursery and implementation of new technologies bring us closer than ever to achieving Barramundi Asia's vision of becoming the world's largest supplier of sustainable barramundi.

"Additionally, the increase in scale achieved with the extra fingerlings going to the sea allows us to use automation to achieve cost reduction and economy of scale."

The company intends to have a semi-automated vaccination machine at the nursery in two months and a fully automated feeding system for the fish at sea in three months.

tienli@sph.com.sg

Innovative farming

Barramundi Asia has an all-new semi-automated fish grading machine, a process that was previously done by hand.

The fingerlings, which are between 20g and 40g, are sorted into different freshwater tanks based on their width by sending them through flexible steel bars to measure their widths.

Though size does not affect the quality or health of the fish in the farm, fingerlings are not mixed in case the bigger fish eat the smaller ones, said Mr Ben Tong Beng Hua, 27, vaccination manager of Barramundi Asia.

The fingerlings spend three months in the nursery. At the six-month mark, they are then transferred to 10m-deep sea cages, where they are left to grow to full size.

Two years on, the full-fledged 4kg to 5kg barramundi fish are scaled and filleted before they are packed for consumers. The cost is based on the quantity purchased, rather than the size of the fish.

During a tasting, this reporter found the fish succulent and mild-tasting, with soft, white, flaky flesh.

Shabana Begum

美羅 METRO

THE PERFECT MIX OF DESIGN, QUALITY & VALUE

METRO CENTREPOINT • METRO PARAGON • METRO CAUSEWAY POINT • METRO.COM.SG

METRO NEVER BEFORE

OPEN TO ALL
NOW TILL 3 MAR
20% OFF*
STOREWIDE & ONLINE INCLUDING COSMETICS & FRAGRANCES

+ ADDITIONAL 10% CASH BACK
with no minimum spending & no exclusions

Promo valid from now till 31 Mar. 10% cashback is capped at $10 per transaction. Limited to the first transaction of the day per customer. Visit dash.com.sg/deals for other terms and conditions.

Download Singtel Dash now.
GET IT ON Google Play | Download on the App Store | Like our Facebook page @SingtelDash for the latest updates

COSMETICS & FRAGRANCES
LIMITED EDITION + WHITENING & BRIGHTENING COLLECTION

SHISEIDO
Receive a 3pc gift with any purchase of the NEW Benefiance products

Top up to $180 nett to receive an additional Limited Edition Rose Gold LED Makeup Mirror (worth $40)

Receive a Beauty Gift Set with a minimum of $220 nett spend

LANCÔME
Blanc Expert Spoteraser Set at $165 (worth $260)

DECORTÉ
AQ Perfect Whitening Kit at $296 (UP $457)
Available at MCP

SISLEY
Receive a Phyto-Blanc Whitening Kit (worth $210) with $600 nett spend

SPECIAL BUY: Sisley Eye Contour Care Duo Set at $360 (UP $402)
Available at MPN

PURCHASE-WITH-PURCHASE
With a minimum of $100 nett spend in a single receipt storewide.
While stocks last.

GRUNN
Robotic Vacuum
UP $239
SPECIAL $179

MISTRAL
16" Stand Fan
UP $89
SPECIAL $39.90

WILDCAPE
Multifloral Honey 1kg
UP $69
SPECIAL $29

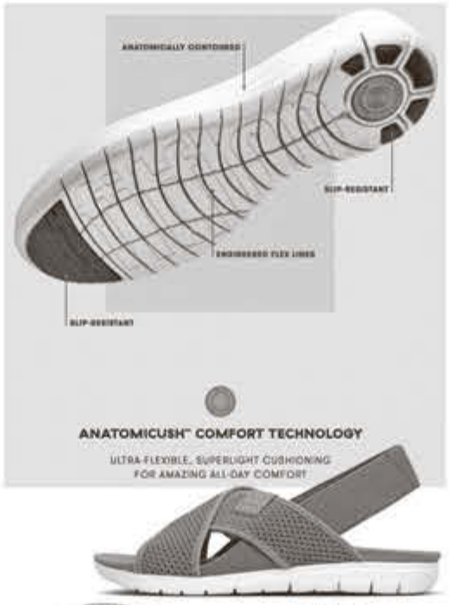
CIRCULON
36cm Chinese Wok
FREE Daytona Toaster (worth $139)
UP $399
SPECIAL $148

NEW ARRIVALS • MIX & MATCH
NOW 1PC AT 15% OFF, 2PC OR MORE AT 20% OFF

Participating brands: Alleira Batik (MPN/MCP), Amii (MPN/MCP), Batik Riana Kesuma (MPN/MCP), Brax (MPN), Gerry Weber (MPN), Kurt Woods, Liberty, Lily (MPN/MCP), M Collection, M. Maison, Marissa, Sophis, Tom Joule (MPN/MCP) and more!

LADIES' FASHION
UP TO 30% OFF* ON REGULAR-PRICED ITEMS
UP TO 70% OFF* SEASONAL REDUCTIONS

TRIUMPH
Everyday Essential, a selection of new, lightweight and breathable T-shirt bras which will give you the ultimate feeling of freedom.
UP Bra $89.90, Brief $29.90
NOW ENJOY $33 OFF TRIUMPH'S REGULAR-PRICED BRA AND PANTY SET
METRO EXCLUSIVE



FITFLOP™
Airmesh™ Toe-Thongs/ Back-strap Sandals
UP $119 - $129
NOW $69 Per Pair
METRO EXCLUSIVE

HOMEWARE CLEARANCE SALE FOR AN EXCEPTIONAL VALUE
UP TO 80% OFF* + ADDITIONAL 25% OFF* FOR PURCHASE OF 5PC OR MORE

CARL SCHMIDT SOHN
A German cookware brand that produces premium quality cookware, utensils and other kitchen accessories.
Red-dot & IF Design award winner 2016.
UP $49 - $99
NOW $25 EA

PLUS, OTHER ASSORTED COOKWARE. CHECK IN-STORE FOR MORE!

Sunhak Diamond Assorted Fry and Wok Pan
Made in Korea • Diamond Coating Non-Stick • Light Weight • Non Induction
UP $39 EA
NOW $14.50 EA

Korea Bellela 36cm Jumbo Wok with Steamer
5 Layers Non-stick Coating • Induction Friendly • Includes a Steamer
UP $159
NOW $50

Assorted Stainless Steel Air Tight Food Storage
Made in Korea • Stainless Steel 18/10 • Safety Certification • BPA Free • Dishwasher-safe • Leakproof Seal
UP $29 - $39
NOW $ $11 - $14.50

Assorted Stainless Steel Sieve
Stainless Steel • Resistant to Corrosion & Damages • Lightweight
UP $22 - $29
NOW $5 EA

HONEY, HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS & TOILETRIES
UP TO 35% OFF* REGULAR-PRICED ITEMS
ADDITIONAL UP TO 20% OFF* ON SALE ITEMS

VITAHEALTH
Turmercare 60s T/P + Knee Support 60s
UP $227.50 / NOW $100
CM $94.50

HONEYWORLD
Manuka MGO30+ 1kg Twin Pack
UP $234 / NOW $89
CM $79

APIPURE
Organic Black Chia Seeds 550g
UP $33 EA
NOW 3 FOR $29

GUARANTEED GIFT & VOUCHERS
METRO DREAMS & CO.

Get an additional **$200** Metro Gift Vouchers
Spend $2,000 & above in a single receipt on mattress**!

Get an additional **$300** Metro Gift Vouchers
Spend $3,000 & above in a single receipt on mattress**!

Get an additional **$500** Metro Gift Vouchers
Spend $5,000 & above in a single receipt on mattress**!

SIMMONS | KING KOIL USA 1898 | Sealy Posturepedic | TEMPUR | MaxCoil

KING KOIL
Pure Luxury Collection
100% Pima Cotton, 950 Thread Count
Fitted Sheet Set Single - King UP $199 - $299 **NOW $99 - $149**
Bed Set Super Single - King UP $369 - $599 **NOW $184 - $279**

KING KOIL
Danishdown Collection
100% Cotton Sateen, 750 Thread Count
Bedset Super Single - Super King
UP $369 - $499
NOW $184 - $249

BALMAIN VANITY
100% Egyptian Cotton 1100 Thread Count Solid Colour
Fitted Sheet Queen - King UP $199 - $219 **NOW 20% OFF + ADDITIONAL 10% OFF**
Quilt Cover Set (with Pillow Sham) Queen - King UP $459 - $499 **NOW 20% OFF+ ADDITIONAL 10% OFF**
Available at MCP

INTERO
Bamboo Cover Downfeel Fibre Pillow
1200g - 1700g
UP $79 - $99
NOW 20% OFF + ADDITIONAL 20% OFF
Available at MCP & MCW

NATURE BASICS
100% Jacquard Cotton Microfibre Chamberloft Quilt
Single - King
UP $199 - $299
NOW $99 - $149

*Terms & conditions apply. Credit vouchers or online rebates will be issued in place of an outright discount for purchase of a manufacturer-controlled brands. The equivalent credit voucher value issued will be calculated on the net amount after use of any credit voucher as payment. Exclusions apply. **Limited to one voucher redemption per receipt. Not applicable for purchase of Metro Gift Vouchers, Metro Gift Cards and Metro Shoppers Cheques. All promotions and gifts are available while stocks last. Pictures are for illustration purposes only. Information is correct at time of printing and may be subjected to changes. Please check in-store or metor.com.sg for details. Metro (Pte) Ltd reserves the right to amend the terms & conditions of promotions without prior notice.

Metro Singapore
MetroSingapore
Save 9657 6477 as Metro Singapore to your contacts list.
Next, WhatsApp 'name' and 'subscribe' to receive the latest promotions.

SHOP ANYTIME, ANYWHERE
Metro App | Google play | App Store

WORLD

MICHAEL COHEN
FORMER TRUMP LAWYER TESTIFIES BEFORE U.S. CONGRESS **A22**

The Sungai Lebam Dam in eastern Johor, which normally has a water level of 14m, has seen its water level plunging to almost 2m below the critical point in recent weeks. The dam currently has enough water to last residents for about 70 days, according to Johor's International Trade, Investment and Utilities Committee. PHOTO: BERNAMA

STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

SUNGAI LEBAM DAM

10.9m
Water level now

12.7m
Critical level

LOK HENG DAM

2m
Water level now

1.5m
Critical level

Water woes in Malaysia as dry spell takes hold

Water levels at two Johor dams worryingly low; annual dry spell expected to last till April

KOTA TINGGI • Two dams in the southern state of Johor state have worryingly low water levels amid a prolonged dry spell in Malaysia, prompting officials to urge residents to use water sparingly.

The Sungai Lebam Dam in eastern Johor, near Pengerang town, which normally has a water level of 14m, has seen its water level plunging to almost 2m below the critical point in recent weeks.

The level has fallen under the 12.7m critical mark to just 10.9m, Bernama news agency reported.

The dam currently has enough water to last residents for about 70 days, said Johor's International Trade, Investment and Utilities Committee chairman, Mr Jimmy Puah Wee Tse.

The water level at another major dam south of Kota Tinggi town, called Lok Heng, is now just 50cm above the critical level of 1.5m.

Mr Puah said there are about 100,000 residents in and around Kota Tinggi, including in areas such as Pengerang and Teluk Ramunia.

He said that the state government has a backup plan to help the areas overcome the low water levels.

"We will dig three tube wells in the area near the dam," he told reporters, as quoted by Bernama. The wells are expected to supply 0.9 million litres of underground water as a backup for the Lok Heng area.

Singapore gets part of its water supply from the Linggiu reservoir, which is separate from the Sungai Lebam and Lok Heng dams.

Mr Puah told the media last week that the Johor government is working closely with water operator Ranhill SAJ and the Johor Water Regulatory Body to monitor the water supply situation amid a long dry spell.

Malaysia has been hit by a heatwave in recent days, forcing the Education Ministry to advise schools to monitor outdoor activities and ensure students drink lots of water.

Outdoor activities should be halted if it is too hot outside, the ministry said.

The dry spell is expected to last till April, and is a regular weather phenomenon that begins at the tail end of the north-east monsoon.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Meteorological Department issued a Level 1 heatwave alert on Monday for 10 areas in the country after high temperatures were recorded for three consecutive days.

The states affected are Perlis, Kedah and Perak in the north, Johor in the south, Pahang in east Malaysia, and the capital city Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia has a three-tier colour-coded warning system for heatwaves.

The Level 1 alert is triggered when the mercury climbs to between 35 deg C and 37 deg C for three days in a row.

Level 2 is triggered when the temperature goes above 37 deg C for three consecutive days.

When this happens, the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change is empowered to officially declare a heatwave in that location, allowing the authorities to close schools.

When temperatures hit 40 deg C and above for the same duration, a Level 3 alert is issued and the Prime Minister will declare a state of emergency.

Johor, however, is not the only state worried about the water levels in its dams and reservoirs.

In Sabah, where water reserves at the major dams are still at a comfortable 80 per cent, eight major rivers have plunged to critical levels, and another nine have hit "alert" levels, the New Straits Times newspaper reported yesterday.

Sabah has only two months of water supply remaining due to the dry spell, warned the state's water department director Amarjit Singh.

He said the department will resort to cloud seeding should the dry spell persist.

In Perak, the Public Amenities and Infrastructure Committee chairman Abdul Yunus Jamhari has requested paddy farmers in Kerian, the main paddy farming district in the state, to monitor their water usage due to the dry weather.

"If we waste water in our paddy fields in the current hot weather, it could affect our crops," he was quoted as saying by Bernama.

And as the mercury soars in Kuala Lumpur, data from the Selangor Water Management Authority website shows that the water level in Sungai Selangor Dam – which supplies 70 per cent of the treated water in the capital and its surrounding areas – was still very high, at 98 per cent on Monday, The Star reported.

Britain experiences summer temperatures on hottest winter day

LONDON • Two days of unseasonable sunshine in Britain this week have resulted in more than the shedding of hats, scarves and winter coats: they have also brought the highest temperatures ever recorded in the country in winter.

Temperatures peaked on Tuesday at 21.2 deg C in Kew Gardens, London, the hottest February day in Britain since records began in 1910, according to the Met Office, the national meteorological service.

Warmer than an average summer day in Britain, Kew's record ended a short-lived run for Porthmadog, Wales, which had laid claim earlier in the day with a high of 20.8 deg C. This was after the rural community of Trawsgoed, Wales, set a record on Monday with a high of 20.6 deg C.

The run of unusually hot days smashed the previous record of 19.7 deg C, set in the Greenwich area of London in February 1998.

"To get more than 20 deg C in May would be a very pleasant day. So to get that in February is obviously very significant," said Met Office spokesman Grahame Madge. "Whether we will see that again next winter remains to be seen."

The weather could not have been more different from a year ago, when Britons found themselves up against a polar vortex nicknamed the "Beast from the East". On one of the coldest days in Britain for three decades, snow and high winds closed schools, stranded drivers and disrupted flights and trains.

The subzero temperatures extended far beyond Britain last winter. Norway recorded temperatures of minus 42 deg C at the start of March, and snow fell in Rome for the first time in six years.

This week's unseasonably balmy temperatures that sent Britons scrambling for sunglasses also broke records in Ireland, where the national meteorological service declared the February temperatures to be the hottest since 1960.

On the Continent, the Netherlands beat its oldest record for the warmest February day with a temperature of 17.8 deg C.

In France, temperatures were as high as 22 deg C, far above the average for this time of year, and a number of towns in Sweden also experienced their hottest ever February.

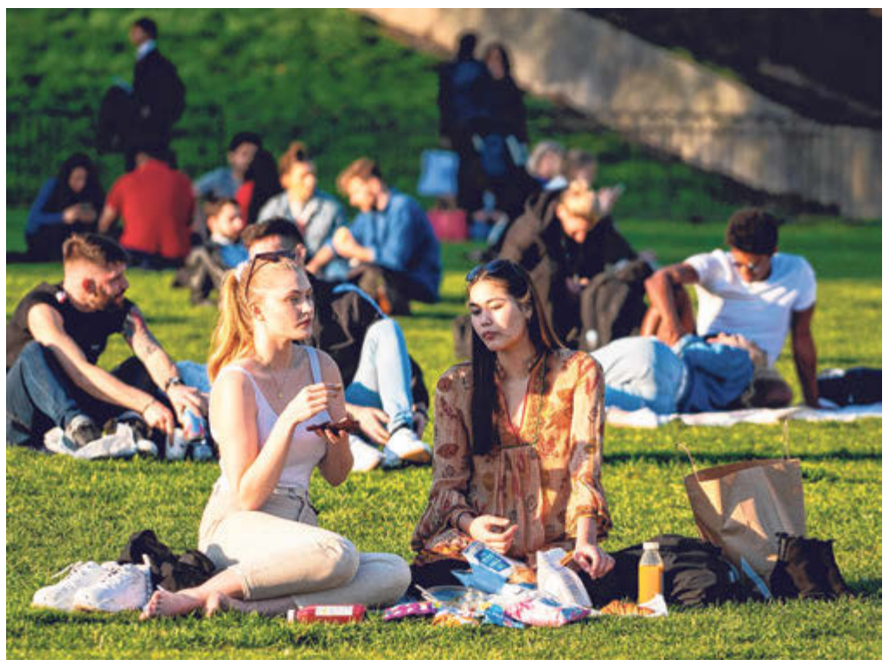
But as moods lifted with the unexpected taste of summer, some voiced worries over such a dramatic shift from the norm.

The record temperature in Britain is "concerning, given what we know about climate science", Mr Leo Hickman, the director of an energy and climate fact-checking website, wrote on Twitter.

"This unseasonably warm weather is part of a global trend of record temperatures and unprecedented extremes," Ms Caroline Lucas, the former leader of Britain's Green Party, tweeted. "This is what climate breakdown looks like."

Those caught on the back foot by the climbing temperatures should not store away those heavy coats just yet: February's regularly dreary weather is set to return.

That could be as soon as today, Mr Madge said. NYTIMES



People basking in the sun at Green Park, central London, on Tuesday as Britain experienced record temperatures for a winter month for the second consecutive day. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

News analysis

Voter turnout a worry at Indonesia polls

Survey shows 30% of respondents plan to sit out vote; abstention a bugbear for candidates

Francis Chan

Indonesia Bureau Chief
In Jakarta

Indonesia has often cast itself as the third largest democracy in the world, particularly after it started holding direct elections in 2004, six years after Reformasi.

With a population of 260 million, three-quarters of whom are eligible to vote this year, Indonesia is behind only the United States and India in the size of its national electorate. But with less than two months before the April 17 presidential and legislative polls, the country is again forced to confront a rising trend of voter abstentions and its impact on the elections.

The Jakarta-based research firm Lingkaran Survei Indonesia said at the release of its latest survey last Saturday that around 30 per cent of respondents are planning to abstain come polling day. If true, this will mean the 2019 presidential and legislative polls – held on the same day for the first time in Indonesia – could see the highest proportion of no-shows at an election since its first experiment with democracy after the fall of former president Suharto in 1998.

Paramadina University political expert Ahmad Khoirul Umam pointed out that voting is not compulsory in Indonesia, hence the declining voter turnout over the years. But he noted that voter participation is still higher in Indonesia than in the US, where about 40 per cent of voters abstain.

Deliberate abstention is a big bugbear for election candidates, especially those in straight fights, such as the presidential contest between the incumbent Joko Widodo and his challenger Prabowo Subianto. President Joko is once again facing the former army general whom he defeated in the 2014 election with a tight margin of 6.3 percentage points, or about 8.4 million out of more than 133 million votes cast.

That was on a turnout of just under 71 per cent. In 2009, it was almost 72 per cent and, in the first direct election held in 2004 for the presidency, closer to 80 per cent of voters cast their ballots. The steady decline in voter turnout will affect the final results of the upcoming elections, especially the presidential polls, with experts like Dr Wawan Mas'udi from Gadjah Mada University saying the President has more to lose.

"Why? Because many of those behind the *golput* campaign are social activists who used to support the incumbent," he added. *Golput* is short for *golongan putih*, or white group in Bahasa Indonesia, but it is also slang for abstention.

The guerilla movement, which started as a protest against rigged elections during Suharto's New Order regime, urged citizens then to invalidate their votes by marking on the white space on their ballot cards instead of checking the box of a candidate or party.

Many groups advocating *golput* today are made up of former supporters of President Joko, who goes by his popular moniker Jokowi. These voters had backed Mr Joko five years ago because he was seen as a reformer with no ties to the political blue bloods and military elite that once ruled Indonesia.

"But just one year into his presidency, activists began criticising Jokowi for his failure to meet campaign commitments to human rights, religious freedom, corruption eradication and law enforcement," wrote Melbourne University academics Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir and Rafiqa Qurrata A'yun in a recent assessment.

They said that disappointment with President Joko peaked when he showed that he was not above playing identity politics by appointing conservative Islamic cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate. The respected senior ulama is believed to have been picked to neutralise the threat from the Islamic far-right, who are bent on derailing his re-election bid.

However, Dr Ma'ruf has not won over younger Indonesians and those who hold moderate views on Islam, including those who still blame him for testifying against former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, better known as Ahok, in his 2017 blasphemy trial.

Electoral commission workers preparing ballot papers for Indonesia's April 17 general elections. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

MAKING THEIR MARK

Dissatisfaction with Jokowi's performance led many of his former supporters, who voted against Mr Prabowo in the last election, to declare that they would rather golput than vote for either of the candidate pairs.

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY ACADEMICS ABDIL MUGHIS MUDHOFFIR AND RAFIQA QURRATA A'YUN

"Dissatisfaction with Jokowi's performance led many of his former supporters, who voted against Mr Prabowo in the last election, to declare that they would rather *golput* than vote for either of the candidate pairs," wrote Mr Abdil and Ms Rafiq.

Many in the Muslim-majority nation also abstain from voting for ideological reasons. This includes followers of hardline Islamic groups, including remnants of the disbanded Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, who refuse to take part in the democratic process because they see it as a Western concept.

Election fatigue is also to blame, especially with the presidential and legislative polls coming just months after a major round of regional elections in June last year. That voters can only choose between the same two presidential candidates from the previous election is also a factor, said Dr Wawan.

"Both are still turning to the same old discourse from 2014," he added. "This is what led to more room for scepticism in certain voter clusters, including those who say the two candidates do not offer any new hope, and so there is no need to vote."

Meanwhile, Mr Joko has continued to poll strongly in recent surveys, although Mr Prabowo and his running mate Sandiaga Uno are closing in.

With about seven weeks to go before the elections, observers warned that the focus on drawing votes from the undecided voters may obscure the real threat of *golput* voters.

Dr Wawan, however, believes there is still time for the candidates to convince these voters to exercise their democratic right. "But this requires hard work," he said.

tkchan@sph.com.sg

Siemens Healthineers congratulates:

ParkwayHealth Radiology

for installing ASEAN's only 1.5T MRI enabled with Biomatrix Technology at Gleneagles Hospital

"ParkwayHealth Radiology offers a full suite of diagnostic and interventional imaging services that enable doctors to reach accurate diagnosis and provide minimally invasive therapies and treatments. Biomatrix is an innovation in MRI technology that takes into account a patient's physique and other physiological variables, which reduces variability and the need for rescans. The result - diagnostic accuracy, consistency and most importantly, an improved patient experience.

Our continued investments in current technology across Gleneagles, Mount Elizabeth, Mount Elizabeth Novena and Parkway East Hospitals, and our six outpatient diagnostic centres in Singapore, are backed by a dedicated team of on-site consultant radiologists with sub-specialisations, experienced radiographers, nurses and support staff, who work hand-in-hand with clinicians to complete the imaging journey of our patients," said Ms Tan Yujuan, Chief Executive Officer, ParkwayHealth Radiology.

SIEMENS Healthineers

FairPrice

Here to make lives better

✓QUALITY ✓VALUE ✓SERVICE

28 Feb – 6 Mar 2019

Wine & Beer

Belgium
MARTENS
$9.90 per pack — MARTENS Green Label 6's x 330ml U.P. $14.50

HEINEKEN
$49.90 per pack — HEINEKEN Beer 20's x 330ml U.P. $58.40

SENDERO
$15.50 per bot — SENDERO Cabernet Sauvignon/ Merlot/Carmenere/ Sauvignon Blanc 750ml U.P. $26.90

2 for $33.80 — TESCO Australia Merlot/Shiraz 750ml U.P. 2 for $50

ESPIRITU CRIOLLO, RESERVE
$19.95 per bot — Chardonnay/ Cabernet Sauvignon/ Malbec 750ml U.P. $34.90

TAHUNA
$23.90 per bot — Sauvignon Blanc 750ml U.P. $28.75

Receive $5 FairPrice Gift Voucher with any 2 bots purchased
2 for $44.90 — LINDEMAN'S Bin 40 Merlot/ Bin 45 Cabernet Sauvignon/ Bin 50 Shiraz/ Bin 65 Chardonnay 750ml U.P. 2 for $52

Just Wine Club members enjoy 8%^ savings on regular & promotional wines.
Check in-store for more details.
^Not applicable to Japanese/ Korean/Chinese wines and beers.

Grocery

FAIRPRICE Ponni Rice 5kg
$7.25 per pack — U.P. $8.30

Banded with 400g
SIMILAC 5Z 2'-FL Milk Powder 850g
$54.50 per pack

COWHEAD UHT Milk Pure/Lite/Slim 1L
2 for $2.95 — U.P. 2 for $4.20

Exclusive
TRUE ORGANIC Organic Australian Milk Full Cream/ Low Fat 1L
2 for $6.15 — U.P. 2 for $7.30

HEINZ Porridge Creamy Oat/ Oat & Apple/ Sunrise Banana/ Fruit & Yoghurt/ Blueberry Oaty 240g
$7.15 per can — U.P. $8.95

USA
PLUM ORGANICS Super Puff Assorted 42g
2 for $11 — U.P. 2 for $15

Buy 2 Get 1 FREE
TARAMI Dossari Japanese Jelly Assorted 230g
$2.45 per tub

FAIRPRICE Natural Fruits & Nuts 150g
$3.95 per pack — U.P. $4.95

KIT KAT 2 Finger Multipack Cookies Crumble/ Hazelnut/Caramel 6's x 19.5g
$2.95 per pack — U.P. $4.20

MCVITIE'S Digestives Thins/Chocfilled Assorted 130g - 180g
$2.20 per pack — U.P. $3.95

JULIE'S Sandwich Biscuits Peanut Butter/ Cheese 330g/360g + 25%
$4.20 per pack — U.P. $4.55

KJELDSENS Choc Cookies Hazelnut/ Macadamia 600g
$12.95 per tin — U.P. $17.95

New & Exclusive
PEPPA PIG/ PJ MASK Learning Cookies Box 2's x 50g
$6.90 per pack

KHONG GUAN Lemon Puff 260g
$2.30 per pack — U.P. $2.80

KHONG GUAN Cream Crackers Plain 300g
2 for $3.15 — U.P. 2 for $3.80

ARNOTT'S Shapes Assorted 175g - 190g
2 for $5.95 — U.P. 2 for $6.90

Exclusive
CC'S Corn Chips Assorted 175g
2 for $5.95 — U.P. 2 for $7.90

USA
OOLALA Potato Chips Assorted 5 oz
$3.95 per pack — U.P. $6.50

KRISPY KING Shrimp Cracker Original/Seaweed/ Tom Yum 60g
2 for $1.95 — U.P. 2 for $2.50

Exclusive
CARMAN'S Muesli Bars Assorted 210g/270g
2 for $10.95 — U.P. 2 for $12.90

PRIMA JUZZ'S Mee Original Spicy/ Creamy Chicken 4's x 81g/87g
2 for $2.75 — U.P. 2 for $3.90

AH LAI White Curry Noodle/ Rice Vermicelli 4's x 110g/90g
2 for $6.90 — U.P. 2 for $9.50

WU LA MA Vegetarian Beef Tendon Assorted 85g - 110g
2 for $3.45 — U.P. 2 for $3.60

USA
SKIPPY Peanut Butter Creamy/ Crunchy 462g
$4.95 per bot — U.P. $6.20

AAA Pickled Lettuce 180g
$1.50 per bot — U.P. $1.65

LEE KUM KEE Panda Brand Oyster Sauce 2's x 770g
$5.95 per pack — U.P. $6.95

AYAM BRAND Club Sardines Assorted 120g
$2.20 per tin — U.P. $2.35

Banded with FREE 2's Curcumin
HELMIG'S Curcumin Effervescent 2 x 10's
$8.15 per pack — U.P. $9.50

GAVISCON Double Action Tablets 250mg 16's
$10.55 per pack — U.P. $11.95

VICKS VapoDrops Cough Assorted 16's
2 for $7.80 — U.P. 2 for $9.90

Purchase With Purchase*

SAVE UP TO 32%

*Buy up to 4 units of each PWP product, with minimum spend of $25.

Made In Australia
MILO Australia 1.25kg U.P. $25.95
SAVE $4.45
$21.50 per tin

PERSIL Low Suds Laundry Powder Detergent Regular/Anti-Bacterial 4.5kg/5kg U.P. $14.75
SAVE $2.90
$11.85 per pack

COCA-COLA Classic Canned Drinks 30's x 320ml U.P. $18.30
SAVE $2.85
$15.45 per ctn

PRIMA TASTE LaMian Laksa/Curry/Prawn Soup/ Chilli Crab 4's x (160g - 185g) U.P. $10.95
Wholegrain LaMian Laksa/Curry/Prawn Soup 4's x (178g - 185g) U.P. $12.20
SAVE UP TO $3.25
$8.95 per pack

FAIRPRICE Jasmine Fragrant Rice 5kg U.P. $8.20
SAVE $1.20
$7 per pack

BORGES Olive Oil Pure/Extra Light 2L U.P. $27.90
SAVE $8.95
$18.95 per bot

MR MUSCLE Multi-Purpose Cleaner Assorted 2L U.P. $5.40
SAVE $1.05
$4.35 per bot

Exclusive
KLEENEX Ultra Soft 3-Ply 100% Virgin Fibres Toilet Tissue 30's x 200 sheets U.P. $19.95
SAVE $2
$17.95 per pack

FairPrice HOUSEBRAND Healthier Choices

FAIRPRICE Thai Brown Unpolished Rice 2.5kg U.P. $5.80
$5.45 per pack

FAIRPRICE UHT Milk Low Fat/Skim/ Full Cream 1L
2 for $2.75 — U.P. 2 for $3.80

FAIRPRICE Olive Oil Spread 500g U.P. $5.45
$4.95 per tub

FAIRPRICE 100% Coconut Water 1L
2 for $4.65 — U.P. 2 for $6.50

FAIRPRICE Low GI Wholemeal Multigrain Bread 400g U.P. $2.70
$2.55 per pack

FAIRPRICE Rice Bran Oil 2L U.P. $8.50
$6.80 per bot

TESCO Exclusive at FairPrice

TESCO Salad Dressing Assorted 250ml U.P. 2 for $7.30
2 for $5.95

TESCO Canned Soup Assorted 400g U.P. 2 for $4.50
2 for $3.95

Buy 1 get 1 FREE
TESCO Chocolate Fudge Cake 450g
$8.95 per pack

MUST BUY†

SAVE UP TO 47%

† Limited To 6 Units Per Purchase.

PEDIASURE TripleSure Chocolate/Vanilla/ Strawberry 850g U.P. 2 for $92.60
SAVE $10.10
2 for $82.50

BEN & JERRY'S Pints Assorted 473ml U.P. 2 for $27.80
SAVE $7.95
2 for $19.85

DYNAMO Laundry Power Gel Assorted 2.7kg/3kg U.P. 2 for $26.70
SAVE $12.75
2 for $13.95

FRANGOSUL Frozen Whole Chicken Griller 900g/1000g U.P. 2 for $9.30
SAVE $3.35
2 for $5.95

Japan
HARADA Green Tea 50's x 2g U.P. 2 for $13.20
SAVE $3.25
2 for $9.95

KIT KAT 2F Funbag International Recipe 12's + 2's FREE U.P. 2 for $12.40
SAVE $3.45
2 for $8.95

MCVITIE'S Digestive Biscuits 400g + 100g U.P. 2 for $4.90
SAVE $1.95
2 for $4.95

FAIRPRICE Rolled Oats 1kg U.P. 2 for $9.50
SAVE $2.55
2 for $6.95

MALING Premium Pork Luncheon Meat 397g U.P. 2 for $5.70
SAVE $1.35
2 for $4.35

FAIRPRICE Premium Canola With Sunflower Oil 2L U.P. $9.70
SAVE $3.75
$5.95 per bot

Banded with 6's x 42ml (Inclusive)
BRAND'S Innershine 7 Berry Essence Value Pack 12's x 42ml U.P. $26.90
SAVE $4.40
$22.50 per pack

Banded with 950ml/950g
DETTOL Shower Gel Assorted 950ml/950g U.P. $15.65
SAVE $3.75
$11.90 per pack

PAMPERS Baby Dry
Diapers M-64's/L-54's/ XL-40's/XXL-34's U.P. 2 for $48
SAVE $14.05
2 for $33.95

Pants M-58's/L-44's/ XL-38's U.P. 2 for $49
SAVE $11.05
2 for $37.95

PURSOFT 100% Virgin Pulp 3-Ply Soft Pack Facial Tissues Ashlynn Anne Sakura/ Chocolate Rain Outdoor/ Chocolate Rain CNY 4's x 130 sheets U.P. 3 for $15.75
SAVE $5.50
3 for $10.25

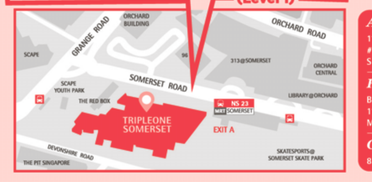
HOME PROUD HP103 3-Tier Slim Wagon Dimensions: 125mm (L) x 550mm (W) x 740mm (H) U.P. $13.90
SAVE $5.90
$8 each

Only Available at Unity

CETAPHIL Gentle Skin Cleanser 2's x 1L + Moisturizing Cream 100g (Value Pack) U.P. $59.90
SAVE $7
$52.90 per pack

BORSCH MED Lingzhi Twin Pack 60's U.P. $149
SAVE $60
$89 per pack

Discover a new level of wellness offerings!
At FairPrice Finest TripleOne Somerset (Level 1)



FairPrice finest
Bringing the fine life closer to you

Address:
111 Somerset Road, #01-01/02, #01-21 to 30, S(238164)

How to get there:
Bus Service : 7, 14, 16, 36, 65, 67, 77, 106, 111, 123, 174E, 174, 175 and 971E
MRT Station: Somerset (NS23)

Operating Hours:
8am – 11pm

FORTUNE DRAW 福运大抽奖
27 Dec 2018 – 20 Feb 2019

Congratulations to our 6th WINNER!
Ms. Ng Siew Kim

Beverage

COCOLIFE Coconut Water 1L U.P. 2 for $7.10
2 for $5.45

ALICAFÉ 3-In-1 French Roast Coffee 36's x 18.5g U.P. 2 for $11
2 for $9.55

Exclusive
ANGUS O'NEIL'S Ginger Beer/ Root Beer 375ml U.P. 2 for $3.40
2 for $2.95

UFC Velvet Coconut Milk Original/ Unsweetened 1L U.P. $4.95
$3.95 per pack

VITASOY Soya Bean Tetra Pack Assorted 6's x 250ml U.P. 2 for $6.30
2 for $5.95

UCC Instant Coffee Jar Assorted 90g - 100g U.P. $11.20
$8.90 per bot

LAO QIAN Instant White Coffee/ Milk Tea/Kopi-O 12's x 28g/40g U.P. $6.85
$5.80 per pack

Clean & Fresh

GILLETTE Mach 3 Turbo Razor/ Turbo Sensitive U.P. $9.90
$8.50 per pack

Buy 2's get 1's FREE (Inclusive)
ORAL-B Toothbrush Cross Action Green Tea/ Cross Action Super Thin 3's U.P. $19.90
$13.90 per pack

HERBAL ESSENCES Detox Shampoo/Conditioner Assorted 300ml U.P. 2 for $17.80
2 for $12.85

NUTOX Anti-Ageing/ Night Repair Cream 30ml U.P. 2 for $53.80
2 for $39.90

NEUTROGENA Rainbath Assorted 16 oz U.P. 2 for $35.80
2 for $21.85

WHISPER Ultra Clean Heavy Day Wings Value Pack 28cm-32's U.P. $13.25
$9.25 per pack

CERTAINTY Adult Diapers
Medium 10's U.P. 2 for $14.10
2 for $11.95

Large 10's U.P. 2 for $16.70
2 for $13.95

HUGGIES Gold
Diapers S-72's/M-66's/L-62's
Pants M-56's/L-44's/ XL-38's/XXL-32's U.P. 2 for $43.90
2 for $37.95

LAURIER Safety Comfort Twin Pack Night Wings 35cm-12's/ Day Slim Wings 22cm-16's/ Ultra Slim Wings 25cm-14's/ Night Wings Gather 40cm-8's U.P. $6.45
$6.25 per pack

DOWNY Concentrate Fabric Conditioner Refill Pack Sunrise Fresh/ Anti-Bacterial/ Garden Bloom/ Baby Gentle 1.5L/1.6L U.P. 2 for $16
2 for $11.95

Banded with Refill 630ml
YURI-MATIC Laundry Liquid Tough Stains/ Colour/Low Suds 2.8kg U.P. 2 for $13.90
2 for $11.95

TOP Concentrated Laundry Liquid Detergent Refill Assorted 1.6kg/1.8kg U.P. 2 for $8.70
2 for $7.45

BREF WC Power Active Toilet Cleaner Assorted 50g/50ml U.P. 3 for $11.85
3 for $9.95

New
SCOTT Kitchen Towel 100% Virgin Fibre 6's x 52 sheets U.P. 2 for $10.50
2 for $9.45

AMBI PUR Gel Fresh Assorted 180g U.P. 3 for $13.50
3 for $7.45
(Excludes Moodtherapy range)

4% REBATE for FairPrice Members. Terms and conditions apply.

3% PIONEER GENERATION DISCOUNT for Pioneers every Monday and Thursday. Present PG Card upon payment. Terms and conditions apply.

2% SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNT for shoppers aged 60 years and above every Tuesday. Present IC upon payment. Terms and conditions apply.

LinkPoints
EARN LINKPOINTS with minimum purchase of $20 and save. Terms and conditions apply.

UP TO 12% OFF EVERYTHING AT FAIRPRICE
Plus! Visa Card is a banking product provided by Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited for Plus! U. Terms and conditions apply.

Available at selected NTUC FairPrice & Unity outlets. Products and variants availability varies from store to store. For more details, please call 6552 2722. Offers valid from 28/2/2019 to 6/3/2019 only. Advertised offers are available from 0400hrs onwards. Limited to 4 units per product per customer unless otherwise stated. While stocks last. We reserve the right to limit quantities. Prices are correct at time of printing. Trimmings and props not included. Traders not allowed. Only selected items are available for online purchase.

For operating hours, please visit fairpriceon.com.sg >> Store Locator.

* With minimum $25 spend in one receipt, excluding statutory (4D, ToTo, Singapore Sweep, vouchers and cigarettes) and PWP items, you can purchase these products at special prices during the same transaction. Limited to 4 units per product. While stocks last!

Enjoy more ways to shop at
FairPrice Xtra · FairPrice finest · FairPrice Shop · FairPrice On

fairpriceon.com.sg
free click & collect on orders over $29
free delivery on orders over $39 (Limited Period)

unity
SCAN TO SHOP

an NTUC Social Enterprise

Malaysian minister unveils plan for flying car

KUALA LUMPUR • Malaysia plans to launch a flying car, a minister has said, sparking a flood of mockery in a country with a chequered history in automotive projects.

The prototype of the vehicle, which uses local technology, will be unveiled later this year, Entrepreneur Development Minister Mohd Redzuan Yusof said on Tuesday, state news agency Bernama reported.

The vehicle will cost about RM1 million (S$331,000) to develop and will fly at low altitudes, he said, without revealing more details.

Previous car projects in Malaysia have not always met with great success – the country started producing Protons in the 1980s but they are routinely criticised for unimaginative models and shoddy workmanship, and their popularity has steadily fallen.

For many people, the flying car project was just another harebrained scheme cooked up by foolish politicians.

"Words fail me. I have never read so much stupidity in my life," one commentator wrote online.

Aman Shah posted on Facebook: "How come this idiot is selected as a minister? Solve the public transport problem first, instead of inventing a flying car."

There have been several attempts around the world to develop flying cars, such as the Transition made by US firm Terrafugia, and the AeroMobil, produced in Slovakia.

Both have taken years and a lot of money to develop, and are yet to go on sale.

Some questioned the wisdom of trying to develop a flying vehicle in Malaysia with the national car industry already facing problems.

"We cannot even promote hybrid and electric cars properly and sell them at affordable prices. Now talking about flying cars. What a joke!" said one comment.

Since returning for a second stint as Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad – who previously championed Proton – has announced plans for a new national car project, triggering widespread criticism.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Politics in business 'hampers Kelantan's development'

Report says extensive political patronage of state-owned companies could be a problem

Trinna Leong
Malaysia Correspondent
In Kuala Lumpur

Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) is being investigated by the anti-corruption agency over claims that it received RM90 million (S$30 million) from former ruling party Umno to cooperate in last year's general election, with the probe also casting a spotlight on its leaders' penchant for driving luxury cars on home ground Kelantan, one of the poorest states in the country.

Kelantan's economic woes are often attributed to its status as an opposition-run state neglected by the central government.

But the north-eastern state of 1.8 million people has been receiving the lion's share of federal aid – RM913 million – in the last five years. Meanwhile, a report by local think-thank Ideas last August showed that extensive political patronage of state-owned companies could be part of the problem.

Kelantan has been governed by PAS since 1990, and has the lowest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita growth of the country's 13 states. In 2017, Kelantan's GDP per capita stood at RM13,593, under one-third of the national level figure of RM42,228.

While the state administration prioritises religious principles – separate queues for men and women in supermarkets, for example – it has no issue with politicians engaging in state business.

"There is a particularly high level of political presence on the boards of directors of GLCs (government-linked corporations), comprising state assemblymen, MPs, former politicians and local division leaders from the governing party, PAS," the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs said in its report, Government in Business: Diverse Forms of Intervention, published last August. "This suggests extensive patronage at work involving high-ranked politicians and local-level leaders."

To be fair, richer states such as Selangor and Perak, run by the ruling Pakatan Harapan coalition, adopt a similar practice: Selangor's chief minister, for example, heads Menteri Besar Incorporated and several of its subsidiaries.

But Kelantan's numbers surpass these, with some 33 politicians appointed to boards of 19 state-owned companies.

The lead author of the Ideas report, Universiti Malaya's professor of political economy Terence Gomez, said: "We found that in Kelantan, such a large number of politicians had been appointed to a large number of GLCs. There were just too many."

What is peculiar to Kelantan is that the deputy chief minister holds more directorships than the chief minister.

Kelantan's chief minister Ahmad Yakob and his deputy Mohd Amar Abdullah are directors of key GLCs, with Datuk Amar in the lead with directorships in nine firms.

Mr Amar said his appointments were approved by Datuk Ahmad Yakob. "Maybe he wants to focus on managing the state," he told The Straits Times.

"PAS is first and foremost a political party, albeit with a religious tinge and bent, and it is therefore not immune to the necessity for political patronage in exchange for support," said Mr Oh Ei Sun, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

Kelantan's chief minister Ahmad Yakob (left) and his deputy Mohd Amar Abdullah are directors of key GLCs in the Malaysian state.

Kelantan's state-owned companies have fared particularly poorly.

According to the Auditor-General's report in 2017, a total of 21 Kelantan state-owned subsidiaries were loss-making, outnumbering the 16 which recorded profits.

Perbadanan Menteri Besar Kelantan – set up to generate investment and corporate growth – and Perbadanan Pembangunan Ladang Rakyat Negeri Kelantan, which helps local farmers, saw losses in 2017 of RM3.2 million and RM7.85 million, respectively.

Mismanagement and poor planning were flagged by the Auditor-General as reasons for these losses.

"One would have expected that a party which prides itself on Islamic values and always claiming higher moral ground on issues would not have endorsed patronage politics in the first place," said Mr Amir Fareed Rahim, an analyst at political risk consultancy KRA Group.

Chief minister Ahmad Yakob told The Straits Times the political appointments were justified. "Though they are politicians, they are also professionals," he said, adding that the directorships were given according to the "suitability" of the individual's strengths.

Mr Amar, who is a PAS vice-president, is a theology graduate and a former lecturer at an Islamic university in Selangor. Mr Ahmad is the party's deputy spiritual leader and an Islamic law graduate who worked as a school teacher before becoming a politician.

Mr Amar acknowledged issues with poorly-run state companies but said little about preventive steps to address them. "Only with the audit, we would know the problems. If there's no audit, how can we know if there's anything wrong within a company?" he said.

Separately, the Finance Ministry has named and shamed several states, including Kelantan, for poor financial management, revealing last October that the state government had requested federal funds to pay its civil servants.

Kelantan state officials have defended the administration, saying that its governance has improved and it has reduced its deficit in the annual state budget.

Mr Ahmad also said much of Kelantan's RM1.4 billion federal debt is for projects to improve the state's water supply.

ltrinna@sph.com.sg

TOO MANY

We found that in Kelantan, such a large number of politicians had been appointed to a large number of GLCs. There were just too many.

PROFESSOR TERENCE GOMEZ, lead author of the Ideas report and a professor of political economy at Universiti Malaya.

An Antara Foto picture showing rescue workers carrying the body of a victim after the collapse of an illegal gold mine in Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi, on Tuesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Dozens buried after illegal Indonesian mine collapses

JAKARTA • Indonesian rescuers scrambled yesterday to find dozens of people buried in the collapse of an illegal gold mine that killed at least three people.

The disaster agency said the effort to save survivors at the remote site on Sulawesi island was hampered by steep terrain and unstable soil conditions after the collapse triggered a landslide on Tuesday evening. Three people have been found dead, while 14 others were pulled from the rubble alive, according to officials.

"Dozens of people were mining for gold at this location when suddenly beams and supporting boards broke due to unstable soil conditions," said disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho.

More than three dozen people might still be trapped at the site in the Bolaang Mongondow region of North Sulawesi, where some five miners were killed in December after an illegal gold mine accident.

The mineral-rich South-east Asian nation has scores of unlicensed mining sites, and safety regulations are routinely flouted.

Some of the still-buried miners were responding to rescuers' calls but it was not clear how many were still alive.

Ground conditions at the mine were unstable due to the large number of holes dug by the miners, officials said. "We still have hope. When we called them they still responded from down there, asking for help," local disaster agency official Abdul Muin Paputungan said.

"We can't use heavy machinery because the location is very steep... it could endanger the victims."

Rescuers were trying to get water to the buried miners but feared a wrong move could worsen the situation. "There are a lot of challenges because the rocks that fell are in a very dangerous position," Mr Paputungan said.

Local hospital chief Wahdiana Mantang said nine patients had been released and several others were being treated for injuries.

"They're suffering from lacerations, gashes, and some have broken bones," she added.

Environmentalists have called on local officials to enforce regulations and safety measures.

"We predicted this was going to happen," said Mr Theo Runtuwene, a local director for the Indonesian Forum for the Environment.

"The area is mountainous and (miners) dug holes there, which is extremely risky... There are dozens of sites in North Sulawesi where the ground is very unstable, especially during the rainy season."

Indonesia has a patchy record on mining safety, particularly for small-scale unlicensed mines.

Eleven miners died in 2016 after a mudslide engulfed an illegal gold mine in Sumatra's Jambi province.

Mr Agung Pribadi, a spokesman for Indonesia's Mining Ministry, said three mining inspectors had been sent to assist in the rescue and that illegal mines had recently been shut in the area. "Maybe now they have started again," he said.

Mr Gatot Sugiharto, who heads the Citizens Mining Association, said there are about 200 unlicensed mines in Indonesia, with 10 in that area of Sulawesi alone.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Rescuers moving a survivor to safety yesterday. Three people have been found dead so far, while 14 others were pulled from the rubble alive. Some three dozen more people may be trapped in the mine. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

4 DAYS SPECIAL
Better, Cheaper & More!

Limited to 3 per product per customer per transaction, unless otherwise stated! While stocks last! No traders allowed!

SHENGSIONG
...all for you!

Promotion Period:
28/02/2019 → 03/03/2019

PURCHASE WITH PURCHASE

Every $20 spent will entitle you to buy product below at very special price
Limited to 3 per customer per transaction, unless otherwise stated! While stocks last! No traders allowed!

SAVE 21%
LAY'S Potato Chips (Assorted Flavours) 184.2g
UP: $4.60
3.60 / Pack

ONLY@SHENGSIONG

EXCLUSIVE

SAVE 16%
HAPPY FAMILY Special Fragrant Rice 5kg
UP: $7.80
6.50 / Pack

EXCLUSIVE

SAVE 18%
FREE SOFTESS 100% Pure Virgin Pulp Hanky Tissue 3-ply x 8-Sht x 8-Pk
SOFTESS 100% Pure Virgin Pulp Bathroom Tissue 3-ply x 200-sht x 10-roll x 3-pk (Green Colour Packaging)
UP: $15.95
12.95 / Big Bag

SAVE 15%
LEE KUM KEE Oyster Sauce 770g + Seafood Soy 207ml
UP: $4.25
3.60 / Set

SAVE 22%
BORGES Extra Virgin Olive Oil 1L
UP: $17.90
13.90 / Bottle

SAVE 18%
NASPAC Pudding (Assorted Flavours) 6 x 108g
UP: $3.60
2.95 / Pack

SAVE 9%
LYNFERRO Newpolitans Chocolate (Assorted Flavours in the Pack) 120g
UP: $4.90
4.45 / Pack

SAVE 13%
HERO Jam (Assorted Flavours) 340g
UP: $5.75
4.95 / Jar

SAVE 23%
NUTELLA 350g
UP: $5.50
4.20 / Jar

SAVE 17%
DEL MONTE Fresh Cut Peach Halves 825g
UP: 2 For $9.10
7.50 For 2

SAVE 13%
NONG SHIM Instant Ramen (Assorted Flavours) 5 x 120 - 132g
UP: 2 For $8.70
7.55 For 2

SAVE 27%
BRANDS Essence Of Chicken 6s + 1s x 68ml
UP: 2 For $39.90
28.80 For 2

SAVE 24%
GROW Ready to Drink Milk (Vanilla / Chocolate) 6 x 180ml
UP: 2 For $15.80
11.90 For 2

SAVE 9%
RIBENA Cordial (Assorted Flavours) 1L
UP: $7.70
6.95 / Bottle

SAVE 34%
TIGER Beer 330ml
UP: 3 For $8.70
5.70 For 3

Products of France
LA CAMPAGNE Merlot 750ml
UP: $23.90
13.95 / Bottle
SAVE 41%

SAVE 37%
SENSODYNE Toothpaste Repair & Protect (Assorted Variants) 100g
UP: 3 For $28.50
17.80 For 3

SAVE 19%
PURSOFT Bathroom Tissue (FSC Mix) (Assorted Variants) 4Ply x 180s x 10 Rolls
UP: 2 For $14.90
11.95 For 2

SAVE 18%
BEAUTEX Box Tissue 3Ply x 100s x 5Box
UP: 2 For $10.30
8.35 For 2

SAVE 17%
MAMY POKO Standard Pants (M60+6s / L48+4s / XL40+4s / XXL32+4s)
UP: 2 For $31.40
25.90 For 2

SAVE 24%
DETTOL Shower Gel Twin Pack (Assorted Variants) 850ml / 950ml
UP: $15.75
11.95 / Set

SAVE 25%
CETAPHIL Moisturizing Cream 453g
UP: $38.50
28.85 / Tub

SAVE 30%
JOHNSON'S Baby Bath Refill (Milk + Rice / Regular) 2 x 600ml
UP: $8.50
5.95 / Set

SAVE 4%
CIF Cleanser (Assorted Variants) 3 x 500ml
UP: $5.35
5.10 / Set

SAVE 8%
TOP Liquid Detergent (Assorted Variants) 2.8kg
UP: 2 For $15.10
13.80 For 2

*Available At ▲ & ■ Outlets Only!

SAVE 30%
MEIJI Bulgaria Yoghurt (Wild Berry / Low Fat) 140ml
UP: 2 For $3.80
2.65 For 2

SAVE 38%
MEIJI Paigen Cultured Milk (Assorted Flavours) 160ml
UP: 4 For $4.80
2.95 For 4

SAVE 10%
MARIGOLD HL Plant Sterols Plus 1L
UP: 2 For $7.00
6.25 For 2

SAVE 21%
INDONESIA BULAN Twee Bah
UP: $12.70
9.95 / Kg

SAVE 34%
GOLDEN PHOENIX Chicken Franks - Halal 340g
UP: $1.45
95¢ / Pack

*Available At ▲ & ■ Outlets Only!

SAVE 13%
SPRINGHOME Dim Sum Chicken & Prawn Shaomai / Prawn Hargow - Halal 160 - 200g
UP: $3.60
3.10 / Pack

SAVE 26%
SUNSHINE Garlic Bread (Assorted Flavours) - Halal 270g
UP: 3 For $10.95
8.00 For 3

SAVE 27%
WALL'S Magnum Mini Multi-Pack Ice Cream (Assorted Flavours) 6s x 55 - 60ml
UP: 2 For $21.80
15.90 For 2

SAVE 42%
MAGNOLIA Mag-A-Cone Ice Cream (Cookie / Vanilla / Mango) - Halal 4s x 115ml
UP: 2 For $13.70
7.85 For 2

SAVE 14%
FROZEN Thawed Norway Atlantic Mackerel
UP: $6.99
5.99 / Kg

Air Flown
AUSTRALIA Gold Blaze Peach 3's
4.99 / Box

Air Flown
CHILE Blueberry 125g
4.35 2boxes

Air Flown
PERU / SOUTH AFRICA Figs 160g
4.45 / Box

Air Flown
KOREA Strawberry 250g
3.95 / Box

Air Flown
ECUADOR Golden Dragon Fruit
6.99 / Pc

Air Flown
AUSTRALIA Flame Seedless Grape(Red)
59¢ / 100g

FRESH Whole Threadfin (L)
19.88 / Kg

FRESH Threadfin Meat
35.88 / Kg

FRESH Threadfin Steak
32.88 / Kg

THAILAND Golden Mango
3.95 3pcs

THAILAND Guava Seedless
33¢ / 100g

850g Free 150g
USA Sweet Potato
3.38 / Pack

CHINA Whole Garlic 500g
1.95 / Pack

Enoki Mushroom 200g
1.95 3packs

AUSTRALIA Carrot
16¢ / 100g

▲ • Blk 209 New Upp Changi Rd #01-631 & #02-631 Tel: 6242 2824 • Blk 720 Clementi West St 2 #01-144 Tel: 6773 6212 • Blk 88 Tanglin Halt Rd #01-10 Tel: 6534 8009 • 18, Yishun Avenue 9, Junction Nine, #02-06, #02-07, #02-08, #02-09 And #02-10 Tel: 6252 9026 • Blk 506 Tampines Central 1 #01-361 Tel: 6636 1713 • No.1 Woodlands Roads #01-07 Tel: 6219 3106
■ • New World Centre No.1 Jalan Berseh #B1-02/22 Tel: 6295 5508 • 301 Geylang Road #01-02 & 02-00 Tel: 6846 1766 • Blk 539A Bedok North St 3 #01-477 Tel: 6242 1442 • Blk 739A Bedok Reservoir Rd #01-01 Tel: 6447 8669 • 7 Jurong West Ave 5 # 01-01 Tel: 6794 2829 • 19 Serangoon North Ave 5 #01-01 Tel: 6481 1218 • 3 Yuan Ching Rd #01-01A/02 Tel: 6262 4166 • Blk 301 Punggol Central #01-01 Tel: 6484 6582 • Blk 301 Woodlands St 31 #01-217 Tel: 6362 3061 • Blk 845 Yishun St 81 #01-184 Tel: 6755 7383 • 200 Upp Thomson Rd Thomson Imperial Court # B1-01 Tel: 6256 5200 • 200 Woodlands Industrial Park E7 #01-30 Tel: 6365 6162 • Blk 61 Teban Gardens Rd #01-21 Tel: 6896 6401 • Blk 52 Chin Swee Rd #01-25 Tel: 6535 0401 • Blk 623 Elias Rd #B1-01 Elias Mall Tel: 6585 1027 • Blk 258 Pasir Ris St 21 Loyang Point Complex #02-10 Tel : 6386 3258 • Blk 4 Woodlands Street 12 #02-61 Tel: 6362 0352 • Blk 105 Canberra Street #02-05 Tel: 6251 2692 • ITE College Central 2 Ang Mo Kio Drive Headquarters, #A1-12 Tel: 6481 1959 • Blk 785E Woodlands Rise #01-01 Tel: 6259 0316 • Blk 573 Woodlands Drive 16 #02-01 Tel: 62190063 • Blk 25 Ghim Moh Link #01-11 Tel : 6268 9010 • Blk 115 Bedok North Rd #01-319 Tel: 6449 9073 • Blk 4 Lorong 7 Toa Payoh #01-107 Tel: 6256 2006 • Blk 122 Ang Mo Kio Ave 3 #01-1753/1755 Tel: 6454 9908 • Blk 233 Ang Mo Kio Ave 3 #01-1168 Tel: 6451 0234 • Blk 352 Clementi Ave 2 #01-91 Tel: 6777 0668 • Blk 544 Jurong West St 42 #01-97/99 Tel: 6562 2820 • Blk 108 McNair Rd #01-295 Tel: 6299 3391 • Blk 18 Teck Whye Lane #01-95 Tel: 6875 0103 • Blk 154A Bukit Batok West Ave 8 #01-01 Tel: 6899 0013 • 27 Penjuru Walk, #01-24 Penjuru Recreation Centre Tel : 6898 0345 • Blk 547 Segar Rd #01-06 Tel: 6250 0664 • 312A Sumang Link #01-04 Tel: 6384 4585 • Blk 527D Pasir Ris Street 51 #01-01 Tel: 6585 4797 • Blk 420A Clementi Ave 1 #01-01 Tel :6268 9512 • Blk 925 Yishun Central 1 #01-211 Tel: 6755 5633 • Blk 85 Dawson Road #01-01 Tel: 6475 0386 • Blk 18B Circuit Rd #01-260 Tel: 6747 2610 • Blk 11 Upper Boon Keng Road #01-901 Tel: 6747 2780 • Blk 473 Fernvale Street #01-06 Tel: 6634 0195 • Blk 446 Fajar Road #01-01 Tel : 67693828 • Blk 660A Edgedale Plains #01-01 Tel: 64816679 • Blk 338 Anchorvale Crescent #01-11 Tel: 62821503 • Blk 417 Fernvale Link #01-11 Tel: 63129093 • Blk 440 Bukit Batok West Avenue 8 #01-10 Tel: 6251 3324 • Blk 675 Yishun Ave 4 #01-10 Tel: 6257 0949 • Blk 451 Bukit Batok West Avenue 6 #01-10 Tel: 6254 2505
www.shengsiong.com.sg

5% Rebate 2% Rebate 5% Rebate 5% Rebate
Up To 12% Cash Rebate

Court to decide fate of Thai Raksa Chart Party

'Sufficient' proof to rule on party that named Princess for PM post

Tan Hui Yee
Indochina Bureau Chief
In Bangkok

Thailand's Constitutional Court has said there is "sufficient" evidence to decide whether a political party that named King Maha Vajiralongkorn's sister as a prime minister candidate should be dissolved.

No more testimonies will be required before it makes the decision on March 7, the court announced yesterday. "There is sufficient evidence to make a ruling," it said in a statement"

Thai Raksa Chart Party, an offshoot of the former ruling Pheu Thai Party, nominated Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya for the post of prime minister on Feb 8, creating an uproar in a country which regards the royal family as above politics.

The move would have given the two parties incredible leverage in the March 24 election, but it was overruled on the same day by an announcement from the monarch.

On Feb 13, the Election Commission proposed that Thai Raksa Chart be dissolved for being "hostile to the constitutional monarchy", and forwarded the case to the court.

The party has maintained its innocence, saying it had nominated the Princess with her consent. After a brief pause, it continued election campaigning.

A Thai Raksa Chart Party election poster on the streets of Bangkok. Thailand's Election Commission is seeking to dissolve the party. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Like Pheu Thai, Thai Raksa Chart is linked to former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was deposed by a military coup in 2006 and lives abroad to evade jail for a graft-related conviction. Thaksin maintains a strong following in the country's north and north-east.

Pheu Thai won the last election in 2011, only to be thrown out by a coup that installed the current military government.

Dr Thawee Surarithikul, a political scientist from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, said dissolving Thai Raksa Chart before the election may create more unrest than if it were done after the polls. "It will dismay their supporters and voters – which I believe are sizeable – and may lead to protests and allegations of an unfair election," he told The Straits Times.

In contrast, disbanding the party after the polls will only raise questions of how the seats it wins are reallocated, he said.

In another case, fast-rising political newcomer Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit got a reprieve yesterday when public prosecutors said the decision on whether to press criminal charges against him will be made after the election.

Police allege that Mr Thanathorn and two other executives from his newly-founded Future Forward Party committed computer crime – punishable by up to five years in prison – after they conducted a live discussion on Facebook last year that was critical of the ruling junta.

His party has denied the charges.

Mr Wichian Thanompichai, who heads the Office of Criminal Litigation, told reporters that a decision on indictment was likely on March 26.

"I don't think we can finish before the election," he told reporters, adding that there was no reason to detain Mr Thanathorn and his colleagues. "These alleged cases are not severe crimes and all the accused persons turned themselves in and extended their fullest cooperation."

Mr Thanathorn said the party will campaign for the election as planned, adding: "We believe in our sincere intentions towards the people, and we believe that people in power should allow the freedom of expression."

Future Forward, made up of several youthful political newcomers, has pledged to shrink the military and reform Thailand's patronage-heavy politics.

Should Thai Raksa Chart be dissolved before the election, Future Forward is expected to attract some spillover votes.

tanhy@sph.com.sg

2 policemen killed as violence in Thai south spikes again

BANGKOK • Two policemen in Thailand were executed after being abducted in the kingdom's violent southern borderlands, police said yesterday as bloodshed spikes again in a 15-year insurgency.

Clashes between ethnic Malay-Muslim rebels and forces from the Buddhist-majority Thai state that annexed the region a century ago have killed nearly 7,000 people since 2004, mostly civilians.

The death toll dropped to a record low last year as Thailand's junta tightened its security web, with militant attacks on civilians becoming less frequent.

But tit-for-tat violence has spiralled in recent weeks, leaving imams and Buddhist monks dead and hitting security forces protecting schools.

On Tuesday, about eight suspected militants stormed a tea shop in Narathiwat province near Malaysia's border, said Lieutenant Sarayuth Khotchawong. "The kidnappers abducted two policemen, took their guns and forced them to get into a pick-up truck."

The men's bodies were found later, a few hundred metres away. One of the victims was Buddhist while the other was Muslim, he said.

The killings occurred several hours after a bomb exploded in neighbouring Yala province, killing a Thai ranger on patrol.

The authorities said the latest attacks were likely in retaliation for raids by security forces in nearby mountains to pursue those responsible for recent assaults on soft targets.

In January, black-clad assailants shot dead two monks.

Militants also killed four civil defence volunteers in a drive-by shooting outside a school.

Security forces injured a boy as they gunned down rebels in counter-operations.

Claims of responsibility are rare in a conflict where the militants melt into remote communities or cross the porous border into Malaysia.

Peace talks have gone nowhere, with the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), who command the majority of rebel foot soldiers, refusing to join discussions with the Thai side.

Thailand remains unwilling to cede ground in public on demands for greater autonomy or allow international observers to mediate talks.

In a rare public statement on Jan 4, the BRN vowed to "keep fighting". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Tiny tot likely holds record for smallest surviving newborn boy

268g This tiny baby was delivered at 24 weeks, last August, reportedly after he stopped growing in his mother's womb. He was so small that he could fit in an adult's cupped hands, said Keio University Hospital in Tokyo where the infant was born. PHOTOS: REUTERS

3.238kg The baby, after five months of treatment, has been discharged from hospital.

TOKYO • A baby born in Tokyo weighing the same as a large onion has gone home healthy, becoming the smallest newborn boy in the world to leave hospital safely.

The tiny tot weighed just 268g when he was delivered at 24 weeks, reportedly after he stopped growing in his mother's womb.

He was so small that he could fit in an adult's cupped hands. But after five months of treatment, he now weighs 3.238kg, is feeding normally, and has been discharged, Keio University Hospital said.

"I can only say I'm happy that he has grown this big because honestly, I wasn't sure he could survive," the boy's mother said.

Dr Takeshi Arimitsu, who treated the infant, said he wanted to tell people that "there is a possibility that babies will be able to leave the hospital in good health even though they are born small".

Keio University Hospital said the boy is believed to now hold the record for the smallest newborn boy to be discharged from a hospital in good health.

The record was previously held by a boy born in Germany in 2009, weighing just 274g, the hospital said, citing a registry put together by the University of Iowa for the world's tiniest surviving babies.

The smallest surviving girl was born in Germany in 2015, weighing 252g, according to the registry.

The survival rate of the smallest babies is substantially lower for boys compared with girls. Experts are not entirely sure why, though there have been suggestions that it could be partly related to the slower development of lungs in male babies, the Keio hospital said.

The baby was discharged last week, two months after his initial due date, local media said.

Japan has one of the world's lowest rates of infant mortality, according to the UN children's agency, Unicef. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China willing to talk to Taiwan, with eye on peaceful 'reunification'

BEIJING • China can talk to Taiwan as long as it helps promote peaceful development and "reunification", Beijing said yesterday, after the island's main opposition party said it could sign a peace treaty if it wins a presidential election next year.

China claims self-ruled and proudly democratic Taiwan as its own and has vowed to bring the island, which it regards as sacred territory, under Chinese control, by force if necessary.

While China has not broached the idea of a peace deal in years, Mr Wu Den-yih, chairman of the Beijing-friendly Kuomintang, said earlier this month that the party could sign a peace deal with China if it won the hotly contested election.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, who is from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), said the island will not accept any deal that destroys its sovereignty and democracy.

China's policymaking Taiwan Affairs Office, in the government's first official response to the Kuomintang's peace deal proposal, said anything that benefits the interests of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be promoted.

Its spokesman An Fengshan said: "As long as it benefits protecting the peace of the Taiwan Strait and increasing the peaceful development of relations, and pushes the peaceful reunification process of the motherland, it can be jointly investigated by both sides."

He did not directly mention the idea of a peace deal in his answer.

China has not mentioned the idea since 2009, when then Premier Wen Jiabao unexpectedly raised it in his opening speech at the annual meeting of the country's Parliament.

China translates the word "tong yi" as "reunification", but it can also be translated as "unification", a term in English preferred by supporters of Taiwan independence, who point out that Beijing's communist government has never ruled Taiwan and so it cannot be "reunified".

Mr An said the DPP was seeking to stymie the wish of the Taiwan people for peace across the Taiwan Strait, which would only harm the interests of the Taiwanese and "ruin Taiwan's prospects and future".

Ms Tsai's party suffered stinging losses to the Kuomintang in mayoral and local elections last November.

Ms Tsai, who wants to maintain the status quo, has said China must use peaceful means to resolve its differences with Taiwan and respect Taipei's democratic values.

Beijing has regularly sent military aircraft and ships to circle the island on drills in the past few years and has also heaped pressure on Taiwan internationally, including whittling down the number of its few remaining diplomatic allies.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has made Taiwan a key focus of his administration, warned in a major New Year's speech that China reserves the right to use force to bring Taiwan under its control. REUTERS

Cold Storage
The fresh food people

Top Swimmers

28 Feb - 6 Mar

Frozen Scallops* Hokkaido
800g Per Pack
Was $32.90
SAVE $10.10
NOW $22.80
Per Pack

KUHLBARRA Fresh Barramundi Fillet*
100g
Was $5.99
SAVE $1.90
NOW $4.09
Per 100g

Banana Prawns* Australia
100g
Was $3.89
SAVE 61¢
NOW $3.28
Per 100g

Fresh Sea Bass*
Was $6.90 Each
SAVE $3.90
NOW $9.90
For 2

Whole Salmon* Norwegian
100g
Was $2.59
SAVE 71¢
NOW $1.88
Per 100g

Also available Salmon Fillet at $2.68 per 100g (Was $4.69)

Frozen Thawed White Fish Fillet*
100g
Was $3.29
NOW $2.99
Per 100g

FUTURE CUISINE Smoked Mussels* Chilli/Garlic
New Zealand
150g Per Pack
Was $10.90 Each
SAVE $3.90
NOW $17.90
Any 2 Packs

FASSLER Smoked Salmon* Assorted
80g Per Pack
Was $8.90 Each
SAVE $2.90
NOW $14.90
Any 2 Packs

Perfect Complements

GENTING GARDEN Classic Mix Salad ☑
200g Per Pack
Was $5.45
NOW $4.95
Per Pack

HOKTO Mushrooms ☑ Bunashimeji/ White Shimeji
100g Per Pack
Was $1.70 Each
NOW $2.95 Any 2 Packs

Washed Potatoes ☑ Australia
1kg Per Bag
Was $5.90
SAVE 95¢
NOW $4.95
Per Bag

High-Brix Navel Oranges ☑
800g Per Bag
Was $5.95
SAVE $1.00
NOW $4.95
Per Bag

Yellow Peaches ☑ Australia
Was $4.50 Each
SAVE $6.55
NOW $6.95
For 3

Spanish Seafood Paella

BY GEN LEE

Scan here for recipe

Eat well, live healthy *with* Cold Storage

UOB delight card Up to 8% rebate + 10% off house brands

Shop Now At online www.coldstorage.com.sg

☑ Earn up to 20% cashback with AIA Vitality | sg coldstorage | @coldstoragesg | Cold Storage Singapore

While stocks last. Only selected offers are available online. Terms and Conditions apply. • All trimmings & garnishings for serving suggestions only. • Pictures used are for illustration purposes only.
*ADVERTISED OFFERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT THESE STORES: SEAFOOD: Alocassia Apartments, Altez, Greenwood, HarbourFront Centre, Marina Bay Sands, NUS Kent Vale and Sentosa Cove.

HK govt to diversify economy, save jobs

A TV screen showing Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan delivering his Budget speech yesterday to a packed legislature. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

It will inject funds into R&D, tech, healthcare services, and support SMEs: Finance chief

Claire Huang
Hong Kong Correspondent

Even as Hong Kong's economy is likely to slow down further this year due to uncertainties from the trade row between the United States and China, and a weaker property market, the government has pledged to plough more money into diversifying the economy, saving jobs and improving lives.

In his Budget speech yesterday, Financial Secretary Paul Chan said Hong Kong's economy grew 1.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year, the lowest in two years.

This brings the full-year growth to 3 per cent, lower than the government's forecast of 3.2 per cent.

The weaker trend is expected to spill over to this year, with economic growth pegged at 2 per cent to 3 per cent.

"However, should the external headwinds deteriorate, especially if the US-China trade conflict escalates, global trade, investment and financial markets will be subject to greater shocks. This will not only affect our exports and asset markets, but also dampen local investments and private consumption," warned Mr Chan.

Financial services, tourism, trading and logistics, as well as professional and business support services made up more than 57 per cent of Hong Kong's gross domestic product in 2017.

But these "are highly susceptible to changes in the external economy", said Mr Chan.

He stressed the importance of riding on the development of the Greater Bay Area and China's Belt and Road Initiative to diversify the economy and extend market coverage "so as to offer more opportunities for our young people".

A key prong is to push further in technology and innovation.

The government will earmark HK$16 billion (S$2.8 billion) to enhance the facilities of qualifying universities in order to boost research and development (R&D), and will also raise the monthly allowance of researchers.

It will set aside HK$5.5 billion to develop tech hub Cyberport 5 and spend HK$500 million on implementing the IT Innovation Lab in the Secondary Schools Programme in the coming three school years, among others.

To support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Mr Chan said he will waive business registration fees for the year, provide more funds for those that adopt technology and raise the maximum amount of funds each enterprise is eligible under the Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales fund.

It will also speed up various housing projects and inject more than HK$10 billion to improve healthcare services.

As widely expected, fewer sweeteners were announced this year. These include a cut in tax on profits and salaries, waiver of property rates for four quarters, extra allowances for social security recipients, and one-off grants for students and the elderly.

The city's fiscal surplus is projected to shrink to HK$58.7 billion, far less than the HK$149 billion recorded last year. Mr Chan said that by the end of March, fiscal reserves could reach HK$1.16 trillion.

Mr John Timpany, tax partner at KPMG China, noted that there were no surprises this year, as the government continued to throw its weight behind innovation and R&D.

One area he would like to see more emphasis on is education.

"There is money going into education... but perhaps with the changing nature of work and the importance of technology going forward, it would be good to see a bit more done to improve Hong Kong's education system, to prepare people for the future and challenges ahead," Mr Timpany said.

Asked how far this Budget would go in helping Hong Kong buffer the effects of global tensions, he said: "There's only so much a government can do... you're always exposed to the whims of the global economy and the ups and downs of very large economies. I think it's unrealistic to expect complete sheltering of both effects in Hong Kong."

huangjy@sph.com.sg

Indonesia's first MRT system is expected to ease Jakarta's road congestion, which sees traffic in the capital grinding to a halt for hours each day. The MRT is a signature infrastructure project under President Joko Widodo, who is seeking re-election in April. He revived plans for the MRT when he was elected the capital's governor in 2012. PHOTO: IKHWAN GEMBUL

Jakarta's new MRT offers a ride out of the jams

MRT Jakarta president director William Sabandar says it is his job to ensure that the project will be delivered by next month.

Jeffrey Hutton
Regional Correspondent
In Jakarta

When Mr William Sabandar, president director of MRT Jakarta, opened the company's head office on the rim off the Hotel Indonesia roundabout in 2016, one of his first acts was to set up a countdown clock in the lobby.

For Mr Sabandar, who oversaw disaster recovery on Nias island after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, it was a move right out of his crisis management playbook: to create a sense of urgency among his staff and set them a deadline.

Back then, the clock read 700-plus days, until the first day of March 2019, the month when he is due to deliver the first stage of the capital's mass rapid transit system.

Last Thursday, as he sat down with The Straits Times, it read seven days, 10 hours and 47 minutes.

He said: "In Nias and Aceh, we were facing a humanitarian crisis. In Jakarta, we are facing a crisis of congestion."

As Indonesians prepare to vote on April 17, that congestion looks set to ease. The US$1.1 billion (S$1.5 billion) project was kick-started by Mr Joko Widodo after he was elected governor of Jakarta in 2012. He is now Indonesia's President.

Owners of 136 pieces of land needed for seven above-ground stations to the south of the city threatened delays.

Project delivery had originally been promised by July last year, a month ahead of the Asian Games.

The technical difficulties of squeezing construction equipment into one of the world's most densely populated cities squashed those hopes early on. But delays past next month will trigger penalties from contractors and it was Mr Sabandar's job to avoid that.

A big project infrastructure win for Mr Joko would just be in time for an election, where he is seeking a second five-year term, but Mr Sabandar insisted: "The election was not the issue. If I go on after March, then I have to pay more. I calculated that by accelerating construction early on it would cost me less."

A new land acquisition law, political will and shoe leather helped speed up the project, he said.

Mr Sabandar made frequent visits to landowners to press his case. The 17 or so who baulked lost in court under a 2012 law that helped speed up land purchases for strategic infrastructure projects.

Mr Sabandar upped the ante when he pressed the Joko administration to yank funding for land acquisitions from the Budget for the following year, focusing minds again with another deadline.

"If we didn't allocate for next year, we would be forced to adopt the mindset that we would have to solve the land problem," said Mr Sabandar.

There is little time to lose. The above- and below-ground MRT system, which will accommodate upwards of 130,000 passengers a day once service frequency reaches full speed, comes as Jakarta's traffic grinds to a standstill. Commutes of four hours a day are not uncommon.

The MRT is set to begin a public trial on March 12.

While many are happy the system is finally a reality, questions linger as to why it has taken so long.

"Traffic is getting worse," said Ms Yesi Maryam, 46, a housewife in Jakarta. "I appreciate the government's effort to speed up the MRT. It has already taken a long time. Most other cities in Asia already have an MRT and we are getting ours only now."

Not that there have not been efforts in the past. Plans for an MRT system were most recently shelved in 2009, after the city government baulked at the 3.5 trillion rupiah (S$336 million) a year price tag to subsidise the project. Proposed fares start at 8,500 rupiah – about a third of the taxi fare for the comparable distance.

Construction of the city's US$600 million monorail stopped in 2006, yielding little more than a few cement pillars which sprout rusty metal along big thoroughfares.

Government data from 2017 suggests that traffic jams cost the city 65 trillion rupiah in lost productivity each year. During rush hour in some parts of the city, traffic speeds can average little more than 5kmh.

The irony is that wealthier Jakartans will be the first to benefit from the MRT. Most poorer Indonesians living far from the downtown area still lack access to commuter rail.

The new train network will make a refreshing change from the grind faced by most people in the city. Big platforms, escalators, gleaming rolling stock and crucially, air-conditioning, help turn a 16km trip from Hotel Indonesia to Lebak Bulus in the south – currently an ordeal lasting at least 90 minutes – into a half-hour jaunt.

Work on the second phase of the MRT, extending into the densely-packed northern part of the city, is planned to start next year. That leg of the journey will be underground, Mr Sabandar said, making land acquisitions easier.

The purchases for the second phase should be completed by the end of the year. An overground light-rail network is already under construction.

But even if the network is built, it is unclear whether status-conscious Jakartans will leave their cars at home and take trains alongside their housekeepers.

Mr Sabandar proposes steep taxes on second cars, limited parking downtown and more park-and-ride spaces at stations.

Stations along the MRT path have set aside space for online ride-hailing apps such as Grab and Go-Jek.

"If we don't use public transport, we will forever be a third-class city, third-world city," Mr Sabandar said.

"A modern city is identified by people – all kinds of people – using public transport."

jdhutton@sph.com.sg

South Korea's fertility rate falls to another record low

SEOUL • South Korea's fertility rate hit another record low last year, government data showed yesterday, falling below one for the first time despite a raft of measures to try and reverse one of the world's lowest birth rates.

The country's fertility rate – the number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime – fell to 0.98 in 2018, far short of the 2.1 needed to maintain population stability.

"It is the first time that the figure has dropped below one since Seoul started collecting data in 1970," Statistics Korea said in a statement.

This means the population of the world's 11th largest economy, currently 51 million, may start sliding before 2028, the year Seoul had forecast as the beginning point for its decline.

The figure for 2017, 1.05, was also a record low.

The South Korean government has spent a whopping 135 trillion won (S$162 billion) since 2005 in a desperate attempt to boost the birth rate, providing child subsidies to parents and launching campaigns to encourage young Koreans to wed and have children, without success.

Many experts cite reasons ranging from the expense of child-rearing to high youth unemployment and a double burden of carrying out the brunt of household chores and childcare for working mothers.

Others believe a key factor is South Korea's notoriously competitive society, including its punishing education system and job market.

"I think bringing another child into this world is a sin," said a 34-year-old Korean woman, who did not wish to be named. "This (Korean) society is just way too competitive. I don't think it's right for any child to go through this system."

Most South Koreans associate child-rearing with marriage, but put off getting wed to prioritise higher education and career.

The country has one of the world's lowest out-of-wedlock birth rates at 1.9 per cent as of 2017 – whereas other developed nations, including France and Norway, had birth rates among unmarried couples at 55 per cent or higher.

Yesterday's data showed that more than 30 per cent of all South Korean women who gave birth last year were aged 35 or older.

Back in 1998, new mothers in that age group accounted for only 6.2 per cent.

Meanwhile, over-65s are expected to make up 25 per cent of the population by 2030 – a phenomenon dubbed the "silver tsunami". AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Rally in Yangon to support changes to Constitution

Tensions up as NLD seeks changes to charter that enshrines military's role in politics

YANGON • Thousands of people rallied in Myanmar's commercial capital yesterday in support of constitutional reform, amid mounting tension between the ruling party and the military over changes to the charter that enshrines the army's role in politics.

Protesters gathered in the centre of Yangon to hear speeches by veteran democracy activists while singers led the crowd in chants of "take a rest, military dictatorship", in the second demonstration in the city in a week.

Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party launched a surprise bid in January to change the Constitution, pushing through Parliament a proposal to form a committee to devise amendments despite objections from military-aligned lawmakers.

The proposal was Ms Suu Kyi's biggest challenge to the army's power in nearly three years, and sparked a protest in the legislature from green-clad military appointees, who stood in silence for several minutes to show their opposition.

The proposal was later approved by Parliament, where the ruling NLD commands a large majority.

One of the organisers of yesterday's protest, Mr Yin Htwe, said: "We are demonstrating to support the constitutional amendments committee.

"We are on the side of the people."

During a press conference last Saturday, a spokesman for the army accused the NLD of using the "wrong procedure" to amend the 2008 charter, which it drafted during military rule.

"Forming the joint committee to amend the Constitution is not in line with the Constitution," said Major-General Tun Tun Nyi, adding, however, that army lawmakers would participate in the exercise.

Under the Constitution, the military is guaranteed a quarter of the seats in Parliament and any change requires a vote of more than 75 per cent of members, giving the army an effective veto.

It also blocks Ms Suu Kyi from becoming president, with a prohibition on presidential candidates with foreign spouses or children.

Ms Suu Kyi has two sons with her late husband Michael Aris, a British academic.

For nearly three years, she has ruled from "above the president" by creating a new position of state counsellor.

The charter also gives the military control of ministries responsible for security, including defence and home affairs.

The NLD has not said what provisions of the Constitution it might seek to reform.

In the past, some members of the party have called for a change to Article 436, which gives the military an effective veto over constitutional reform.

Mr Thein Tun and his wife, Ms Khin Khin Win, were among the crowd of protesters yesterday. The 73-year-old man said: "I want to change all the sections which disturb the current government's work."

His wife added: "It is important, and for the good of the country."

REUTERS

Under the Constitution, the military is guaranteed a quarter of the seats in Parliament and any change requires a vote of more than 75 per cent of members, giving the army an effective veto.

WorldBriefs

Boeing nominates Haley to join its board

SEATTLE/WASHINGTON • US aerospace manufacturer Boeing said on Tuesday it has nominated Ms Nikki Haley, former US ambassador to the United Nations and a close ally of President Donald Trump, to join its board of directors at the company's annual shareholders' meeting on April 29.

If elected by Boeing shareholders, Ms Haley would help guide the future of America's largest exporter, which has a network of suppliers across the US and the world, as Washington and Beijing have been locked in intense negotiations to end a trade war.

Viewed as a rising star in the Republican Party, Ms Haley has often been mentioned as a future presidential candidate. Her counterparts at the UN saw her as a voice of clarity in the Trump administration. REUTERS

IBM under fire for ethnic labels on job application

NEW YORK • IBM has been called out by job seekers for using racially insensitive labels in an online job application form, prompting an apology from the tech giant.

New York University computer science student Alex Gao said he felt offended after being forced to choose among ethnic categories including "yellow" and "mulatto" in applying for a software developer internship in the US. BLOOMBERG

Japan's sumo wrestlers hit by whisker ban

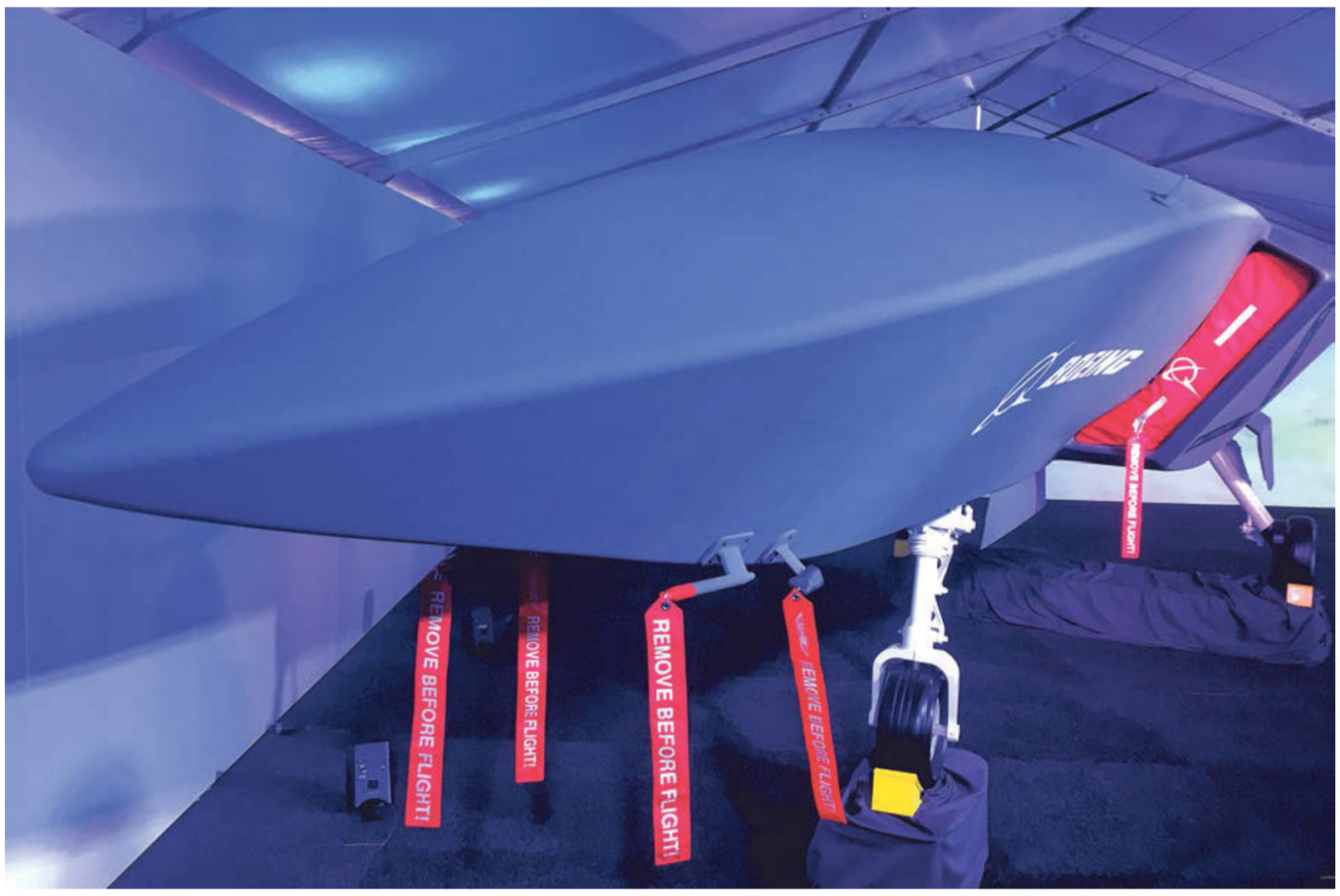
TOKYO • Japanese sumo officials have introduced a crackdown on beards, calling them "indecent", under strict new rules on personal grooming.

Wrestlers have been told that they must look neat and clean during competitions.

The draconian whisker ban is part of fresh regulations which also bar tattoos and long nails, a sumo spokesman said yesterday, as the authorities look to clean up the image of Japan's iconic sport.

Superstitious sumo wrestlers often decline to shave their beards during tournaments as they believe it brings them luck. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Boeing unveils unmanned, cheaper combat jet



A model of Boeing's new unmanned, multi-role aircraft, which is 11.6m-long and has a 3,704km range. It is developed in Australia and its first flight is expected in 2020. PHOTO: REUTERS

AVALON (New South Wales) • Boeing yesterday unveiled an unmanned, fighter-like jet developed in Australia and designed to fly alongside crewed aircraft in combat for a fraction of the cost.

The US manufacturer hopes to sell the multi-role aircraft, which is 11.6m-long and has a 3,704km range, to customers around the world, modifying it as requested.

The prototype is Australia's first domestically developed combat aircraft since World War II and Boeing's biggest investment in unmanned systems outside the United States, although the company declined to specify the cost.

The Australian government is investing A$40 million (S$39 million) in the prototype programme due to its "enormous capability for exports", Defence Minister Christopher Pyne told reporters at the Australian International Airshow.

Defence contractors are investing increasingly in autonomous technology as militaries around the world look for a cheaper and safer way to maximise their resources.

Boeing rivals, such as Lockheed Martin and Kratos Defence and Security Solutions, are also investing in such aircraft.

Four to six of the new aircraft, called the Boeing Airpower Teaming System, can fly alongside a F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, said Mr Shane Arnott, director of Boeing's research and prototype arm Phantom Works International.

"To bring that extra component and the advantage of unmanned capability, you can accept a higher level of risk," he said. "It is better for one of these to take a hit than for a manned platform."

The Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies in the US said last year that the country's Air Force should explore pairing crewed and uncrewed aircraft to expand its fleet and complement a limited number of "exquisite, expensive, but highly potent fifth-generation aircraft" like the F-35.

"Human performance factors are a major driver behind current aerial combat practices," the institute's policy paper said.

"Humans can pull only a certain number of G's, fly for a certain number of hours or process a certain amount of information at a given time," it added.

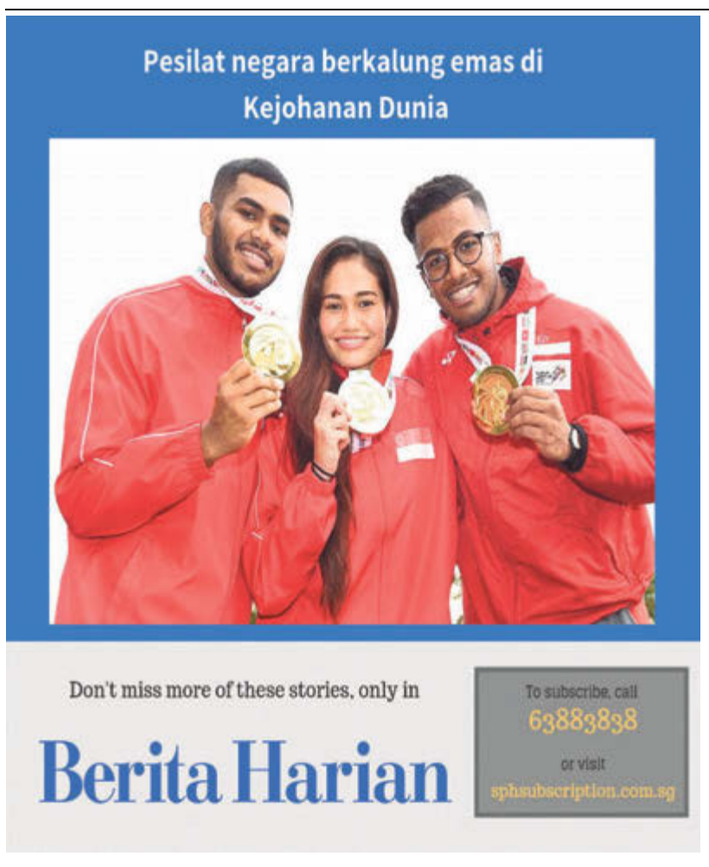
Besides performing like a fighter jet, other roles for the Boeing system include electronic warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance alongside aircraft like the P-8 Poseidon and E-7 Wedgetail, said Ms Kristin Robertson, vice-president and general manager of Boeing Autonomous Systems.

"It is operationally very flexible, modular, multi-mission," she said. "It is a very disruptive price point. Fighter-like capability at a fraction of the cost."

She declined to comment on the cost, however, saying it would depend on the configuration chosen by Boeing customers.

The jet is powered by a derivative of a commercially available engine, uses standard runways for take-off and landing, and can be modified for carrier operations at sea. She declined to specify whether it could reach supersonic speeds, common for modern fighter aircraft.

Its first flight is expected in 2020. REUTERS



Discover Greener Pastures

Call 6289 8822 or e-mail notices@sph.com.sg to place your Change of Address Notices

US took down Russian troll farm for midterm polls

It prevented Russian-based agency from meddling and spreading disinformation

WASHINGTON • The US military took down a Russian troll farm last election day in a cyber attack that continued for several days after the vote, part of what US officials have said is a campaign to block and deter interference in American democracy.

The operation was intended to prevent the Internet Research Agency (IRA), based in St Petersburg, Russia, from spreading propaganda or disinformation aimed at undermining confidence in the midterm vote or the results of the election, US officials said.

The operation was aimed at taking the IRA offline for several days, from election day until the results were certified by local officials.

The IRA, the best known of the Russian troll farms that create large amounts of propaganda, has been accused by the US government of meddling in the 2016 presidential elections. It is not part of the Russian government but is controlled by oligarchs loyal to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Intelligence agencies had assessed that the Russian troll farms that create and spread disinformation in the United States and Europe were likely to step up their disinformation activity on the day of the vote and while ballots were being counted.

Officials said the election day operations were part of a larger campaign led by US Cyber Command and the National Security Agency to secure the midterm vote.

Those operations began with a campaign of direct messages sent to Russian operatives who had created disinformation and propaganda aimed at sowing dissent and undermining confidence in US voting systems. Those direct messages were aimed at deterring the creators of propaganda.

The election day operation, reported on Tuesday by the Washington Post, was conducted under new powers authorised by the White House.

The new powers, officials said, have sped up decision-making, ensuring that bureaucratic concerns do not get in the way of taking action.

Intelligence officials have said it is difficult, if not impossible, to use cyber operations to take an adversary offline permanently.

Cyber weapons typically exploit unpatched vulnerabilities in software. Given time, the target of an operation can find workarounds or fix software problems, restoring its Internet connectivity or computer operations.

Because of that, officials said, the operations against the IRA were designed to last only for a limited number of days.

Mr Joseph Holstead, deputy director of US Cyber Command (public affairs), said the military did not "discuss classified cyberspace planning and operations".

He said: "US Cyber Command will continue to work as part of the whole-of-government effort to defend our elections and democratic institutions from foreign malign influence."

After the election, under another White House executive order, the director of national intelligence conducted an analysis of foreign interference during the event.

That report, which has not been made public, found that the Russians sought to interfere in the vote, not by trying to hack voting machines but by spreading disinformation.

The report found that Russia used social media, fake personas and Moscow-controlled media to inflame opposite ideological sides with an aim of further polarising the United States.

On Capitol Hill, intelligence committee officials declined to discuss the election day cyber operation.

But after a hearing on the rise of authoritarianism in Russia, China and elsewhere, Representative Adam Schiff, who leads the House Intelligence Committee, said Russian efforts to interfere in elections were continuing.

"There is a prioritised part of the Russian agenda to not just interfere in our democracy but also interfere in democracies in Europe," Mr Schiff said. "They are pushing their authoritarian model to undermine institutions that reinforce democracy." NYTIMES

Trump a racist and conman, Cohen tells US Congress

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer Michael Cohen told Congress yesterday that Mr Trump is a "racist", a "conman" and a "cheat" who knew in advance about a release of e-mails by the WikiLeaks website aimed at hurting his 2016 Democratic presidential rival.

Michael Cohen claims the US President knew in advance about e-mail leaks aimed at hurting Mrs Hillary Clinton.

Cohen, Mr Trump's one-time "fixer", said the US President directed negotiations for a real estate project in Moscow during the White House race even as he publicly said he had no business interests in Russia, according to Cohen's prepared testimony.

The hearing before a Democratic-led House of Representatives panel got off to a contentious start when the panel's top Republican tried but failed to postpone the session, complaining about the timing of Cohen providing his written testimony to the committee.

In his opening statement, Cohen said he would hand over documents to support his assertions.

"I am ashamed of my weakness and misplaced loyalty – of the things I did for Mr Trump in an effort to protect and promote him," Cohen said.

"I am ashamed because I know what Mr Trump is. He is a racist. He is a conman. He is a cheat."

Mr Trump ordered him to pay US$130,000 (S$175,000) to adult film actress Stormy Daniels to cover up an affair in violation of campaign finance laws, and also told Cohen to lie about it to First Lady Melania Trump, according to Cohen's statement.

Although many of the accusations against Mr Trump had emerged in news reports during his 2016 campaign and since he took office, the televised congressional testimony of a former loyalist provides a detailed public record with the potential to influence a large US audience.

The sweeping claims against Mr Trump from a man who once said he would take a bullet for his boss come as Special Counsel Robert Mueller appears to be close to completing his investigation into possible collusion between Mr Trump's 2016 campaign team and Russian efforts to sway the vote.

Mr Trump, who has denied any collusion between his campaign and Moscow, has called the Mueller investigation a "witch hunt". He has also called Cohen a liar who is trying to reduce his prison time, and a "rat".

"He did bad things unrelated to Trump. He is lying in order to reduce his prison time," Mr Trump said in a Twitter post yesterday from Vietnam, where he was meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Later, sitting alongside Mr Kim, Mr Trump did not answer reporters' questions about Cohen, who is scheduled to begin a three-year prison term in May after pleading guilty to multiple criminal charges.

US officials have said the e-mails released by WikiLeaks were stolen by Russia as part of Moscow's campaign of hacking and propaganda during the presidential race aimed at sowing discord in the country as well as harming Mr Trump's rival, Mrs Hillary Clinton.

Mr Trump previously denied knowing in advance about the WikiLeaks release of Democratic National Committee (DNC) e-mails during the election.

Cohen, in his prepared comments, said he was in Mr Trump's office in July 2016 when Roger Stone, a self-described "dirty trickster" and long-time political adviser to Mr Trump, called the Republican presidential candidate.

Cohen said Stone told Mr Trump he had been speaking with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who told him there would be a dump of e-mails within a couple of days that would damage Mrs Clinton's campaign.

On July 22, 2016, WikiLeaks released internal DNC e-mails that drove a wedge between supporters of Mrs Clinton and her rival for the Democratic presidential nomination, Senator Bernie Sanders.

Although Mrs Clinton won the nomination, that rift weakened her candidacy.

"Mr Cohen's statement is untrue," Stone said in an e-mail, but did not specify which parts of the statement he meant.

Stone has been indicted by Mr Mueller on charges of lying to Congress about his communications with others related to WikiLeaks e-mail dumps.

Stone, who has pleaded not guilty to charges brought by Mr Mueller's team, denies having advance knowledge of WikiLeaks' plans, although text messages show that during the campaign he made several attempts to make contact with Assange.

However, Cohen said in his statement that he does not have direct evidence that Mr Trump or his campaign colluded with Russia.

"I do not. I want to be clear. But I have my suspicions," Cohen said.

Cohen, 52, was one of Mr Trump's closest aides and fiercest defenders, working with him on business and personal deals for a decade.

But he turned against him last year and is cooperating with prosecutors after pleading guilty to tax evasion, bank fraud and campaign finance violations. REUTERS

Left: People surveying the charred engine of the train which crashed through the buffers at the main train station in the Egyptian capital Cairo yesterday. Below: A man amid the debris at the scene of the accident. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, EPA-EFE

Cairo train station crash and fire kill at least 20, injure 43

CAIRO • At least 20 people were killed and 43 injured when a locomotive smashed through the buffers at the main train station in the Egyptian capital Cairo yesterday, the Health Minister said.

Transport Minister Hisham Arafat resigned after the incident, the Cabinet said in a statement.

State television said the authorities have arrested the train driver.

Footage circulating on social media from a security camera inside the Ramses station showed the train failing to stop as it arrived at platform six, smashing through the buffers and a metal end railing, and exploding into a huge ball of fire.

Passengers carrying luggage ran for their lives as the fire spread, and several people were running covered in flames, witnesses said.

Health Minister Hala Zayed said the authorities had not been able to identify many of the 20 bodies recovered because they were too badly burned.

Witness Ibrahim Hussein said: "I saw a man pointing from the locomotive as it entered the platform, and screaming 'There are no brakes! There are no brakes!' before he jumped out of the locomotive. And I don't know what happened to him."

Security sources said there was no indication the crash was deliberate.

The Transport Minister said the train's diesel tank had exploded.

Egypt has one of the oldest and largest rail networks in the region and accidents causing casualties are common.

A train collision in Alexandria killed more than 40 people in 2017.

Egyptians have long complained that successive governments have failed to enforce basic safety standards for the railways.

The fire sent smoke billowing above the station. Inside, the train's charred engine could be seen tilted to one side next to a platform.

Dr Zayed said that in addition to the 20 killed, 43 people were injured, 15 of whom had been released after treatment. State television earlier put the death toll at 25 and said 50 were injured.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly announced from the station that the incident would be investigated and anyone found responsible would be held to account.

The Transport Ministry briefly suspended all arrivals and departures at the station before reopening all platforms except the one where the crash happened. REUTERS

May to seek MPs' approval for new Brexit strategy

British PM wants more time to rework deal struck with EU

LONDON • Prime Minister Theresa May was scheduled to face a vote early this morning, Singapore time, by MPs over her newly revised Brexit strategy, which allows for a possible request to delay Britain's EU departure if her divorce deal is not approved.

She will ask lawmakers to approve a three-step plan set out on Tuesday that would give her more time to attempt to rework a draft deal struck with the European Union more than three months ago.

Under the new plan, if she fails to come up with a deal that wins MPs' support by March 12, Mrs May would call a vote on a no-deal Brexit on March 13 and, if that is voted down, another vote on delaying Brexit on March 14.

In a piece published in yesterday's Daily Mail, Mrs May said her preference was for a deal allowing Brexit on March 29, and she urged Parliament to vote in favour.

Parliament should "do its duty so our country can move forward", she wrote.

The Prime Minister, who reached an agreement with European leaders late last year but saw it overwhelmingly rejected by British lawmakers in January, had repeatedly ruled out delaying Brexit.

But her dramatic reversal on Tuesday came amid threats of mass resignations from her ministers, who fear Britain leaving the EU without a deal on March 29.

The government published an updated assessment on Tuesday of preparedness for such a scenario, which found a majority of businesses are not ready for a new trading regime.

It also warned that some food prices were likely to rise – particularly for fresh fruit and vegetables – and that this could "exacerbate, or create, shortages".

However, Mrs May's change in course has already angered Brexit hardliners in her Conservative Party, with influential MP Jacob Rees-Mogg warning "any delay to Brexit is a plot to stop Brexit".

Mrs May was also set to face a series of votes on various amendments tabled by MPs, including cross-party moves to lock in her commitments made on Tuesday. Many MPs are still anxious about the prospect of a no-deal departure, while Brexit hardliners want changes to the deal's so-called "backstop" clause to keep the Irish border open in all scenarios.

Mr Rees-Mogg said MPs would not be able to block a no-deal, telling BBC Radio "if there is still no majority for the Prime Minister's deal... we are still faced with the same situation" after any delay. He listed the changes Mrs May's deal would need to win his vote, saying he could back it "if there is a clear date that says the backstop ends".

Separately, an amendment put forward by Labour MP Yvette Cooper and Tory backbencher Oliver Letwin seeks to bind Mrs May's commitments and help bring forward the "necessary legislation to change the exit date".

Meanwhile, the main opposition Labour Party will table an amendment with five demands, including Britain remaining in a Customs union with the EU after Brexit.

In a significant shift, the party's leader Jeremy Corbyn announced on Monday that it would support a second referendum on the issue if, as is likely, he fails to get his demands adopted.

Cross-party supporters of another referendum on Brexit have also put forward an amendment to kick-start that process next month. It is not expected to pass in the House of Commons, where a majority of MPs are still thought to be against another referendum.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Screenshots from social media showing firefighters working to free a rat stuck in a manhole cover in Bensheim-Auerbach, Germany, on Sunday. The chunky animal (above) is shown flailing its arms and squeaking in distress. A close-up photo showing the rat with its mouth agape has also tickled social media users, who said that they could relate to the tubby critter.
PHOTOS: REUTERS

A happy tail: Tubby rat freed by rescuers

BENSHEIM (Germany) • Animal rescuers and firefighters in the German town of Bensheim raced to an unusual call for help this week, when a chubby rat with a bit too much winter flab became wedged in the hole of a manhole cover.

The rotund rodent has now made headlines across the world after the local animal rescue group – Berufstierrettung Rhein Neckar – posted photos of the rat's unfortunate situation on Facebook.

According to the Facebook post, a young girl had spotted the helpless rat on Sunday afternoon and alerted the group.

Animal rescuer Michael Sehr told local media that he tried to free the rat himself but to no avail.

He then called in the volunteer fire department from nearby Auerbach.

Referring to the rat, Mr Sehr said: "She had a lot of winter flab and was stuck fast at her hip – there was no going forward or back."

In a video shared by the group on YouTube, the chunky animal is shown flailing its arms and squeaking in distress.

A close-up photo showing the rat with its mouth agape has also tickled social media users, who said that they could relate to the tubby critter.

Nine volunteer firefighters could be seen arriving at the scene to lift the manhole cover, before Mr Sehr was able to release the rodent and drop it back down the sewer.

The Auerbach volunteer fire department said on its Facebook page that the rescue operation was completed in a short time. It added that the rat was unharmed.

After the successful operation, the young girl was pictured thanking the rescuers with a drawing filled with hearts.

Many social media users applauded them for their compassion towards a creature that is typically viewed as a nuisance.

Facebook user Carly Stevens wrote: "Thank you for your kindness to that little one."

Another Facebook user, Anita Morris, said the worth of a human is shown by how he treats "the seemingly worthless".

In response, Mr Sehr said: "Even animals that are hated by many deserve respect."

Inn the mood for retirement: Texan plans ultimate holiday

CHICAGO • American seniors seeking to retire on the cheap have a new source of inspiration: a Texas man who plans to spend his golden years in Holiday Inn hotels to avoid costly nursing home fees.

"For a combined long-term stay discount and senior discount, it's US$59.23 (S$79.80) per night," Houston resident Terry Robison said on Facebook three weeks ago in a post that has since gone viral.

"They treat you like a customer, not a patient," Mr Robison said. "Want to see Hawaii? They have Holiday Inn there too."

More than 113,000 people have shared Mr Robison's idea – a fairly detailed one, at that – to rely on the budget hotel chain, which offers benefits such as free breakfast, for daily living.

"The maid checks to see if you are okay. If not, they'll call an ambulance... or the undertaker," Mr Robison added.

The plan has resonated at a time when costs for retirees have skyrocketed. The median price of nursing homes, with trained medical staff, is now just over US$100,000 a year, according to a CNBC report.

Competition is at least partly to blame, with some 10,000 baby boomers retiring each day, according to the business news channel.

"I've actually met an elderly lady one time that was actually living in a Hampton Inn. She was quite content," said one Facebook commenter in reply to Mr Robison's post.

InterContinental Hotels Group, the parent company of Holiday Inn, did not immediately return a request for comment.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

EASY LIVING

The maid checks to see if you are okay. If not, they'll call an ambulance... or the undertaker.

HOUSTON RESIDENT TERRY ROBISON

Parkinson's drug trial offers glimmer of hope

LONDON • An experimental drug could offer hope for restoring damaged brain cells in Parkinson's patients, scientists said yesterday, although they cautioned that a clinical trial was not able to prove that the treatment slowed or halted the neurodegenerative disease.

The trial involved delivery of a protein therapy directly into the brains of patients.

Scientists said some brain scans revealed "extremely promising" effects on damaged neurons of those who received the treatment.

Dr Alan Whone, a Parkinson's specialist at Britain's Bristol University who co-led the trial, said: "The spatial and relative magnitude of the improvement in the brain scans is beyond anything seen previously in trials."

Researchers said the therapy warranted further investigation even though it failed to demonstrate improvement of symptoms in patients who received it when compared to others given a placebo.

"The primary outcome was disappointing," Dr Whone told reporters at a briefing in London.

Parkinson's disease affects around 1 per cent to 2 per cent of people over age 65.

It causes tremors, muscle stiffness and movement and balance problems.

Although some medicines can improve symptoms, there is no cure or treatment that can slow the progression of the disease.

This trial involved 41 patients who all underwent robot-assisted surgery to have tubes placed into their brains.

That allowed doctors to infuse either the experimental treatment – called Glial Cell Line-Derived Neurotrophic Factor (GDNF) – or a placebo directly to the affected brain areas.

GDNF is made by the privately-held Canadian biotech company MedGenesis Therapeutix.

Half of the patients were given monthly GDNF infusions and half received monthly placebo infusions.

After nine months, all participants were offered the GDNF infusions for a further nine months.

Results showed some signs of improvements, Dr Whone said, but there was no significant difference between the treatment and placebo groups.

He said this was in part due to the sizeable placebo effect in this trial.

The placebo effect has been known to confound clinical trials of treatments for conditions involving the brain, boosted by patients' expectations that a potential treatment will work.

But the brain scan results suggested the drug might be starting to reawaken damaged brain cells.

After nine months, there was no change in the scans of patients who received a placebo, but those who got GDNF showed major changes in a key area of the brain affected by the disease.

Dr Whone said this suggested GDNF could be "a means to possibly reawaken and restore" brain cells that are gradually destroyed by Parkinson's disease. REUTERS

OPINION

THE STRAITS TIMES

Ng Yat Chung SPH Chief Executive Officer
Anthony Tan Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Ignatius Low Chief Marketing Officer
Glen Francis Chief Technology Officer
Chua Wee Phong Executive Vice-President (Circulation)

Warren Fernandez Editor-in-Chief (English/Malay/Tamil Media Group) and The Straits Times Editor
Sumiko Tan The Straits Times Executive Editor
Dominic Nathan Managing Editor (English/Malay/Tamil Media Group)
Helen Chia, Paul Jacob, Rahul Pathak, Lim Chuan Huat, Ravi Velloor, Vikram Khanna Associate Editors
Paul Cheong Night Editor
Ong Hwee Hwee Digital Editor

Zakir Hussain News Editor
Abdul Hafiz Associate News Editor and Sunday Editor
Li Xueying Enterprise Editor
Kor Kian Beng Defence and Security Editor
Jeremy Au Yong Foreign Editor
Susan Long Lifestyle Editor
Lee Yulin Sports Editor
Chua Mui Hoong, Audrey Quek Opinion Editors
Peter Williams Art Editor
Stephanie Yeow Photo Editor
Mathew Pereira Forum Editor

The Straits Times says

India, Pakistan must pull back from brink

After two days of strikes across their heavily armed border, India and Pakistan gave utterance to some words of peace. "Let's sit together and settle this with talks," Prime Minister Imran Khan said yesterday, hours after Pakistani jets carried out strikes at a "non-military target" in India-controlled Kashmir and claimed to have shot down two Indian planes. India made no direct response to his call. But Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, attending previously planned talks with her Chinese and Russian counterparts, said earlier in the day that New Delhi did not wish to see a further escalation of the situation. Her remarks came a day after India bombed terrorist camps deep inside Pakistan for the first time since their 1971 war. India said it killed "a very large number" of terrorists planning suicide bombings. Both nations have asserted their attacks caused no civilian casualties.

Claims and counter-claims are part of the pattern in subcontinental encounters. Such words were heard after India's "surgical strikes" in 2016 in response to a militant attack that India blamed on Pakistan. That incident did not lead to an escalation in tensions. Will this time be different? The prognosis is grimmer partly because on Tuesday, India markedly redefined the conflict by sending its fighter jets past the disputed territory of Kashmir and beyond its international border with Pakistan. In the past, India made sure to muffle comments after attacks to stub out a retaliatory spiral.

But after the 2016 strikes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government went on an offensive to isolate Pakistan. This time, the circumstances are especially delicate: The country is months away from a general election. Things could take a dangerous turn if sentiments were inflamed further – if, for instance, Pakistan were to mistreat the Indian pilot reportedly in its custody; or should India release grisly footage of attacks on alleged terrorist camps in Pakistan. Pakistan is also on shaky ground, having to navigate a deep economic crisis and helmed by Mr Khan, who is six months in office and facing his biggest foreign policy challenge. It is essential for both sides – each with stocks of more than 100 nuclear warheads and an array of missiles to deliver them – to pull back from the brink. But that alone is not enough. Decades of tensions have meant forfeiture of huge economic opportunities. Bilateral trade languishes at US$2 billion (S$2.7 billion) a year and South Asia remains the world's least integrated region. Festering enmity has corroded governance and polarised societies, pushing India to identity politics and leaving Pakistan vulnerable to jockeying by powerful generals and extremist ideologies. Education, health and job creation are undernourished priorities in both nations. Days before the strike, Mr Modi called on Mr Khan to join India in fighting poverty and illiteracy, instead of fighting each other. Such calls need to be heeded.

ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

HomeFront

Bumpy road to cleaner transport

Raising diesel duty puts Singapore on course for a healthier, more liveable environment. But more can be done, such as pegging COEs' lifespan to mileage instead of years.

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport Correspondent

Reintroducing diesel duty at the pumps is the right thing to do despite complaints that it will lead to rising costs.

Wasteful – and pollutive – habits on the road have gone on for too long. These include prolonged engine idling, which is against the law but hard to enforce.

It is also not uncommon to find empty locked taxis with the engine running. Cabbies wanting to keep their vehicles cool while they take a meal break have two keys for this. Drivers napping in their vans or trucks – with the engine on so they can snooze in cool comfort – are a common sight as well.

The same goes for fleet operators which keep bus and trailer engines running while they wait for passengers and cargo, sometimes for well over an hour.

These practices are predicated on cheap fuel and make high running costs just the right instrument to rein them in.

In his Budget statement on March 18, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat announced that diesel will, with immediate effect, attract a duty of 20 cents a litre – up from 10 cents a litre when he first announced in 2017 the move to tax the fuel at the point of usage.

To cushion the duty hike, the minister announced cuts in upfront diesel-related taxes.

The upfront tax reductions will not offset the diesel duty increase entirely. And rightly so – because if they did, there will be no impetus for behavioural change.

And the Government is counting on a change so that air quality here can improve.

But it needs to do more.

Even with the duty increase, diesel is still significantly cheaper than petrol. (At Caltex, a litre of diesel costs $1.84 compared with $2.18 for the cheapest petrol.)

This is not so in jurisdictions such as Australia and Europe, where diesel is often costlier than petrol.

In Singapore, the price of premium petrol includes a duty of 64 cents a litre, while non-premium petrol attracts a duty of 56 cents – way higher than diesel duty.

It is this disparity that makes diesel artificially cheap. This is an intentional pro-business concession. And it was with this in mind that the Government did away with diesel duty in 1998, in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis.

It was meant to be a temporary economic relief, but it stayed on for two decades. So, reintroducing it in 2017 and raising it last week were moves that were long overdue.

HEALTH AND OTHER COSTS

To be clear, the premise for fuel tariffs is sound. There needs to be a cost that reflects the externalities of fuel usage – mainly congestion, noise and air pollution.

It is the last one which is of greatest concern. The World Health Organisation estimates that 4.6 million people die each year from air pollution.

While transport may not be the biggest contributor to air pollution, vehicles tend to operate near where people live, work and play. So the exhaust fumes have a direct and dire impact on health.

And as health cost is a major concern here, every little thing which helps one minimise visits to the doctor is a good thing.

Here, a usage-based fuel tax is more likely to lead to a desired outcome than an upfront levy. The latter is a sunk cost and may even encourage higher usage.

Some observers say the diesel duty hike will be counterproductive. For instance, taxi drivers will drive more in the hope of getting more customers so as to offset the cost increase.

There will be drivers who will react that way. But others will realise they can similarly offset the hike by driving more judiciously (no hard acceleration and sudden braking), minimising engine idling, inflating tyres properly and reducing empty cruising.

All the same, sceptics will point out that Singapore's air quality is largely at the mercy of its neighbours' actions, so a diesel duty rise is not going to make much of a difference.

The current unseasonal haze arising from fires in Johor landfills brings that point to focus. But that argument – that nothing Singapore does matters – is fallacious.

Like ink to water, every little drop makes a difference.

Less than a year after Singapore switched to unleaded petrol in January 1991, air quality here improved noticeably. Mr Lim Boon Heng, then Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, noted that lead levels had halved to 0.1 micrograms per cubic m, from 0.23 micrograms per cubic m, after nine months of unleaded petrol's debut at the pumps.

That was despite less than half the vehicles here switching to the cleaner fuel. Mr Lim said: "To those who have not yet converted, our message is, 'Think of your children's health'."

Policymakers would do well to heed that call when it comes to changes that do not have immediate or obvious economic benefits, such as those to do with health and the environment.

Singapore's very move to switch to unleaded petrol was with leaded feet – so much so that Malaysia beat the Republic to introducing the fuel. And Singapore has been slow too in reintroducing diesel duty. Hopefully, it will raise the duty over the next few Budgets so as to attain parity between the cost of petrol and diesel.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES

At the same time, there are many other ways to nudge Singaporeans towards cleaner transport.

Encouraging walking and cycling is one. Applying high vehicular emission standards – and adhering to them strictly – is another.

Embracing electrification is yet another. In the early 1990s, a decade before Mr Elon Musk started Tesla, Singapore was looking seriously at introducing electric vehicles (EVs) here.

An inter-ministerial Green Plan called for the adoption of EVs as part of a strategy to make Singapore a green city by 2000.

Powerful agencies such as the National Science and Technology Board (the predecessor of A*Star) and the Economic Development Board threw their weight behind the idea. They saw EVs as one way for Singapore to plug into emerging technologies such as advanced battery systems and energy management systems.

Electricity provider Singapore Power was also a strong supporter, for obvious reasons.

But nothing came out of the EV push as EV technology was then deemed not mature enough. Seeing how the driving range of electric cars has trebled since, that conclusion may seem justified in hindsight.

On the other hand, with the passage of time, any technology can seem "immature". Should we wait indefinitely then?

Sure, electric cars are not entirely emission-free or green as electricity is still generated from fossil fuels. But EVs can help improve air quality significantly in population centres while reducing noise pollution. Both will have a direct impact on health.

A cleaner, better environment also helps to maintain Singapore's competitiveness – in the same way its reputation for safety, security, rule of law and strong infrastructural support does.

Electric cars are just one means to that end, of course. Ditto hybrid vehicles (including hybrid vans and trucks). Going car-lite will contribute just as much, if not more.

Going car-lite, however, goes beyond a stringent control on car population, such as how many kilometres the population clocks. That goes back to a usage-based framework within which going car-lite will have a more meaningful and immediate impact.

WHAT ERP II CAN DO

The second-generation Electronic Road Pricing system (ERP II), slated to roll out next year, will allow Singapore to do just this.

The satellite-based islandwide system will be able to track every vehicle and the distance it clocks. As such, it will be possible to peg a vehicle's certificate of entitlement (COE) lifespan to mileage instead of years.

This way, motorists will drive more judiciously, instead of now, when the sunk cost effect leads to indiscriminate usage.

Along with its instant pricing mechanism, ERP II will make people more aware of the real cost of motorised transport, which includes taxis and private-hire cars.

That cost includes healthcare cost, the cost of making Singapore liveable for generations to come and the cost of maintaining its economic competitiveness.

The question is, will policymakers be bold enough to employ the full potential of ERP II? Or make bigger shifts towards usage-based taxes even if it means drastically altering something as sacrosanct as the COE system?

If reintroducing diesel duty at the pumps is the right thing to do, there is no reason why the principle cannot or should not be extended further.

christan@sph.com.sg

Wisdom called for as India, Pakistan push to edge of war

Both countries should weigh the costs of escalating conflict in the aftermath of terrorist attack in Kashmir

Ravi Velloor

Associate Editor

Indian soldiers surveying the scene yesterday as smoke billowed from the wreckage of an Indian Air Force helicopter which crashed in the Budgam district in Kashmir. PHOTO: REUTERS

For the past two decades, and particularly since hostile neighbours India and Pakistan announced their nuclear capabilities with multiple tests, it was commonplace to see South Asia described as the most dangerous spot in the world and a potential nuclear flashpoint.

More recently, thanks to the sustained nuclear and ballistic missile testing in North Korea and the threats issued by its leader, that dubious distinction has moved to the Korean peninsula.

Now, just as things seem to be on the mend in North Asia, South Asia is in focus again.

The Valentine's Day terror attack on a convoy of Indian paramilitary troops in India's Jammu and Kashmir state by a suicide bomber killed more than 40 troopers, shocking the country and the rest of the world. It was the worst attack in India since the November 2008 terror strike in Mumbai that killed more than 150 people, including a Singaporean woman lawyer.

The Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan-based militant outfit that emerged from the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, the outfit blamed for the Mumbai outrage, has claimed responsibility for last week's attack.

Indians across the vast nation are baying for blood and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who rose to power based on his claims to a muscular governance style, had to respond. And he did, in the early hours of Tuesday.

A swarm of fighter jets shot into the sky from bases in northern India. Four of them – all Mirage 2000 multi-role jets – sneaked across the border 80km to Balakot, in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunwa province. Once overhead, they dropped 1,000kg bombs that flattened buildings said to be harbouring JeM militants.

India, which says it killed some 300 JeM militants, trainers and cooks, described it as a "non-military, preemptive strike against terrorists, not Pakistan".

Still, the message was clear – no location was off-limits henceforth if it was used to target India.

CREDIBILITY AT STAKE

Although Pakistan says the bombs missed their targets and exploded harmlessly, it is nevertheless a frightening situation. Just as Mr Modi is approaching elections to retain office, the Pakistani state's credibility is also on the line.

For India to do a "surgical strike" on militant camps in a contested border region, as it did in the Uri sector of Kashmir in 2016, can perhaps be overlooked. But not one so deep into the neighbour's territory.

Pakistan is still smarting from the US commando action in May 2011 that knocked out Osama bin Laden in the garrison town of Abbotabad, not far from Balakot. That raid not only exposed it to suspicion that Osama had been living under military protection all along, but also Islamabad's evident helplessness, or inability, to detect the secretive strike in time.

But to be insulted by a superpower like America is one thing. To suffer similar ignominy at Indian hands is lethal to the credibility of its political leadership and the powerful military that sees itself as the ultimate arbiter of Pakistan's destiny. It backs the vaunted Pakistani establishment into a corner.

"Now it is time for India to wait for our response," Major-General Asif Ghafoor, Pakistan's military spokesman, said on Tuesday evening. "The response will come at a point and time of our choosing, where our civil military leadership decides and, as a matter of fact, has decided."

It is clear that India was emboldened to mount such an audacious strike after two telephone calls over the weekend between US National Security Adviser John Bolton and his Indian counterpart, Mr Ajit Doval.

Mr Bolton, according to the Press Trust of India, told the wire service that he had conveyed the message that the US "supports India's right to self-defence". US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo chimed in, saying on Twitter: "We stand with #India as it confronts terrorism. Pakistan must not provide safe haven for terrorists to threaten international security."

If Pakistan expected to find some comfort in Beijing, it was not immediately forthcoming.

China, also on the back foot with India over its reluctance to endorse JeM leader Masood Azhar being labelled a global terrorist, was strictly neutral this time, calling for both sides to "exercise restraint that will help stabilise the situation in the region and improve mutual relations".

A NAVAJO MOMENT

There is a Navajo belief that there are seven times in life that you must make a decision that determines your life path, and taking the wrong road means you must either backtrack or stay on the path to ruin. Pakistan is in one of those Navajo moments and the world is watching to see what choices it makes.

JeM's swift claim of orchestrating the Kashmir attack – which it probably rues – cannot be rolled back. Hafiz Saeed, a co-founder of Lashkar, in its time ranked with Al-Qaeda as among the top terror groups of the world, operates freely in Pakistan, making bitter speeches against India and Mr Modi. He does this even as the United States has a US$10 million (S$13.4 million) bounty on his head.

As an editorial in Pakistan's widely respected Dawn newspaper pointed out, the Pakistan-based perpetrators of the Mumbai attack have yet to be brought to justice.

A few days ago, former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, now retired, spoke candidly in a television interview about his country's support for non-state actors and the price it had paid for this in terms of some militants turning on the Pakistani state itself. However, when asked whether it was time for the Pakistani state to arrest Saeed and another Lashkar co-founder, his response was a brisk "no comment".

It has also fallen into a pattern that whenever a Pakistani leader talks about cordial ties with India, the militants have found a way to scuttle the nascent peace-building.

After the devastating Nepal earthquake of April 2015, then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif requested, and was quickly granted permission by Mr Modi, to send Pakistani military aircraft over Indian airspace to help with relief.

Later, Mr Modi, impressed by Asean's attempts to coordinate disaster relief work in South-east Asia, requested Mr Sharif, whom he seemed to trust, to start a similar effort for South Asia, saying if he were to do so himself, it would smack of Indian overlordship.

Within months, militants dressed in Indian military uniform mounted a suicide attack on a forward base of the Indian Air Force, killing seven people and effectively derailing ties.

It cannot be missed that in the weeks before the Kashmir terror attack, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and his army chief were both quoted making positive comments on the need to improve ties with India.

However tightly reined in the terror groups may be, they need to show occasional success in order to shore up morale in the ranks and to maintain a constant flow of recruits. This is why their "handlers" – whether they are retired Pakistan military, as alleged, or other forces – loosen the reins periodically. Of course, the question is, why not prevent them from operating altogether?

BITTER HISTORY

This is where the vexed nature of Pakistan-India ties comes into play.

From their birth as independent nations in 1947, Kashmir has been the mutual bone stuck in their throats. Pakistan has coveted control of all of the Kashmir Valley, which it feels it was unfairly denied by the sleight of hand of the departing British, as well as a Hindu ruler who initially sought to stay independent but then opted for India.

By the logic of the Partition of India, contiguous Muslim areas were to have gone to Pakistan, born as an enclave for Muslims, and the Muslim-majority Valley should probably have been Pakistan's.

But it did not happen that way and New Delhi quickly consolidated its grasp on the picturesque province.

Today, India sees control of Muslim-majority Kashmir as essential for its secular narrative and to disprove the two-nation theory that spawned the birth of Pakistan – that Hindus and Muslims were "two nations" that could not subsist as one.

Having got an iron grip on the province, decades of mishandling – by New Delhi and by corrupt local politicians – have contributed to the Valley's disenchantment.

Dawn, while holding that Pakistan could do more to improve ties, is not incorrect in pointing out that "the Indian military's brutal tactics... have fired up Kashmiri resistance, with the region's disillusioned youth convinced that only armed struggle against India will help them secure their rights".

It is not easy to see Pakistan ending its attempts to influence matters in the Valley. The sharing of Himalayan river waters that rise in India, giving New Delhi a potential stranglehold on Pakistan, has added to Islamabad's sense of insecurity.

Some would say they have good reason: In 1948, India, angered by Pakistani attempts to destabilise the Kashmir Valley, briefly blocked the Ravi and Sutlej rivers, threatening a drought on Pakistani Punjab.

Although India has an impeccable record of upholding a 1960 river water-sharing treaty between the two, Pakistan's sense of vulnerability has never ceased.

Lately, Hindu nationalists have been calling for India to turn off the spigot again and India's water resources minister has publicly said the country would tap more of its entitlement of Indus river water rather than leave it for Pakistan to use.

COSTS OF WAR

Still, those who fear a nuclear exchange can perhaps rest easy, even though the Pakistani military spokesman said a meeting has been called of the National Command Authority that controls nuclear weapons.

Pakistan knows it has little strategic depth to absorb, and survive, an Indian nuclear strike.

India is acutely aware that any strike on its neighbour would instantly bring radioactive fallout over its own fertile plains, given the wind patterns on the subcontinent. Neither side is suicidal, even if both now have tactical nuclear weapons that limit radioactive fallout.

A brief ground war cannot be ruled out though and should that happen, it will prove costly for both. India will find it difficult to fight a war in Kashmir, given the hostility of the local population. Adil Ahmed Dar, the 22-year-old suicide bomber, was not a Pakistani but a Kashmiri Indian.

Pakistan, its finances already stretched, may not be in a position to sustain more than five days of conflict, should it spread.

Two years ago, I passed the elite tri-service Defence Services Staff College while on a golfing holiday in the southern Indian hills. It could not escape my notice that the institute's mascot was an owl perched above the Sanskrit words "yudham, pragya", which translates as "to war, with wisdom". It is a cautionary motto that both sides need to adopt.

velloor@sph.com.sg

Ivanka Trump and the American Dream

David Von Drehle

These are tough times for the American Dream. The land of opportunity goes looking for a friend these days and winds up with Ms Ivanka Trump, former princess of Manhattan.

Waxing philosophical on Fox News recently, she expressed doubts that real folks in the United States would ever embrace the left-wing idea of a guaranteed income. "I don't think most Americans, in their heart, want to be given something," she said.

In case you wonder where she formed that impression, Ms Trump said: "I've spent a lot of time travelling around this country over the last four years. People want to work for what they get." Later she added: "They want the ability to live in a country where there's the potential for upward mobility."

Who knows what Ms Trump, in her heart, was feeling as she delivered these remarks.

Either she lacks the self-awareness to understand how unseemly it is for second-generation trust-funders to patronise people who are eking out a living, or she figures the rabble is too stupid to notice what she is doing.

Ms Trump's grandfather, Mr Fred Trump, made a fortune as a residential real estate developer in the outer boroughs of New York after World War II. He funnelled that fortune to her father and his siblings from the time they were children; Mr Donald Trump began receiving US$200,000 a year from his dad's business at the tender age of three.

In the next generation, it was more of the same. Ms Trump and her siblings grew up in baronial luxury in a Midtown tower and on a sprawling Hudson River estate. Prepped at the tony Chapin School and Choate Rosemary Hall, she swanned into the Ivy League before being invited to launch her own jewellery line.

She married Mr Jared Kushner, whose admission to Harvard just happened to follow shortly after his parents pledged US$2.5 million to the school.

Inherited wealth is nothing new. But until recently, the daughters and sons of wealth were trained to acknowledge their advantages, not pretend them away.

Most Americans, in their hearts, would love to be given one-tenth – one-hundredth! – of the bounty Ms Trump has been given. Most Americans would happily pluck ripe clumps of money from their family trees, if only it were there.

Instead, in their hearts, they pray that their next of kin are solvent when they die. No one needs more unpaid medical bills or another underwater mortgage. These folks care about the American Dream because it's better than poverty, not because it's better than Easy Street.

And they care about opportunity – enough to understand that Ivy League seats reserved for rich kids mean less room for meritorious strivers.

The average Jane and Joe don't bust their humps because they prefer work to more refined pursuits. They do it because they must, or (a far superior motivation) because they find in work an opportunity to improve themselves, their families and their world as they define it. The opportunity for improvement is what they truly seek, and neither work for work's sake, nor life on the government dole, can match that sense of purpose and progress.

But where in today's politics is a robust, credible voice for optimism? Who's pointing the way to a society of abundant opportunities for improvement?

Not the right-veering Republicans, with their catalogue of resentments. And not the left-listing Democrats, with their litany of grievances.

With less than a year before the presidential primaries begin, we have two parties of anger and no party of hope. President Donald Trump feeds on anger. But Democrats still have a chance to pivot towards optimism.

There is no reason a campaign to cut carbon emissions must be a burden equivalent to fighting a world war – but that's the rhetoric of the Green New Deal. It can be an opportunity to lead the next great era of invention.

There is no reason a campaign to make higher education more affordable must be pitched as a fight against banks and corporations. No reason justice for all must come at the expense of any.

The record of human history clearly demonstrates that health, wealth, education and freedom can rise simultaneously. Abundance begets abundance; investments deliver returns; problems cheerfully faced with determination yield unimagined solutions.

The American Dream is about more than just money. That is why it can't be addressed with the dreary language of mere economists. Democrats will do well in 2020 if they speak of hope, of the upside of national life, of the problems Americans will solve together. That's the spirit Americans all inherit, and the legacy they must tend. WASHINGTON POST

Ms Ivanka Trump and her siblings grew up in baronial luxury. She was prepped at elite schools and she swanned into the Ivy League before being invited to launch her own jewellery line. PHOTO: REUTERS

Singapore today: An egalitarian approach to tax

Nitin Pangarkar

For The Straits Times

I read with great interest Professor Steven Kelman's article about Singapore 50 years ago and now.

Prof Kelman suggested that Singapore was now being run like a corporation ("the nation appears to have moved from being a cause to being more of a corporation") and had moved away from its socialist roots.

He argued that the taxation policy had become less egalitarian and cited the maximum rates for personal and corporate income taxes and the regressive goods and services tax as evidence.

For example, the top individual income tax rate fell from 55 per cent in 1980, to 20 per cent in the early 2000s before going up to 22 per cent in 2015. Corporate tax rate fell from 40 per cent to 33 per cent in 1987, to 26 per cent in 2000 and 17 per cent in 2010.

While I agree with the notion of GST as a regressive tax, I disagree with some of the arguments about the tax rates being unreasonably low and less egalitarian.

While examining tax policy, it is important to look beyond direct income taxes and tax rates.

Let me first address tax rates.

The United States, with which Prof Kelman compared Singapore, has a number of deductions and the higher tax rates become applicable after all the deductions (for example, the deduction for mortgage interest), making the tax rates far lower than the stated maximum tax rate. A significant percentage of US citizens do not pay any federal income taxes because of the multitude of deductions that are allowed.

Singapore, on the other hand, has very few deductions. Thus comparing the maximum tax rates gives us an inaccurate picture of the gap between the progressiveness of the Singapore tax policy versus the US tax policy (or any other country that offers extensive deductions).

While the direct taxes may be lower (even without allowable deductions) in Singapore, the tax burden on high-income earners is not necessarily lower.

This is because the two items that higher-income earners use (either because of a genuine need or a want) are taxed heavily.

Many higher-income people live in condominiums, where the prices paid by owners include the steep land costs and stamp duties paid at the point of purchase, which can run into tens of thousands of dollars, as well as significantly higher property taxes (which are progressive).

Additionally, car ownership is taxed heavily in multiple ways – through the vehicle quota system, duties on cars, taxes on petrol and road tax. Increasingly, car owners are paying higher usage charges, such as Electronic Road Pricing and parking charges.

Lower-income groups, on the other hand, are provided subsidised housing in the form of Housing Board flats – probably the biggest subsidised housing programme in the world. They also use more extensively public transport, in which the Singapore Government has invested tens of billions of dollars, and the fares are well below the fares observed in many developed countries.

The Singapore Government also extensively subsidises education and healthcare. While primary and secondary education is either free or offered at nominal costs, in many countries, tertiary education is another matter.

The tuition fees for Singapore universities are well below even the resident tuition fees paid by students in the US. Just to cite one example, the Ohio State University, which is ranked 56th in the US among national universities, charges tuition fees of US$10,700 (S$14,400) a year to Ohio residents, almost twice as much as the National University of Singapore.

While these subsidies in transport, education and healthcare are available to all Singaporeans, they tend to be used more intensively by lower- or middle-income earners. For example, higher-income earners may educate their children in foreign universities or choose private rooms when hospitalised.

Even with similar usage patterns, the quantum of subsidies bestow a larger proportional benefit on lower-income earners.

The story for corporate tax is similar. While the US corporate tax rate is high on paper, a multitude of deductions and credits lower the effective tax rate to about 18 per cent – not far from the corporate tax rate in Singapore.

My intent was not to say whether the Singapore tax system is optimal or more appropriate than the system elsewhere. I just wish to point out that broad indicators such as maximum tax rates are likely to lead to inaccurate conclusions about whether a system is egalitarian or not.

One toxic side effect of having a high tax rate with many allowable deductions is the many frictions that will inevitably arise. For instance, there is a tax preparation industry in the US which does good business because of the complexity of the tax code.

One toxic side effect of having a high tax rate with many allowable deductions is the many frictions that will inevitably arise.

For instance, there is a tax preparation industry in the US which does good business because of the complexity of the tax code.

A simpler tax code with lower tax rates and few deductions eliminates the need for a professional tax accountant and thus reduces frictions – either the government gets the money or the taxpayers keep it.

A complex tax code, combined with a high tax rate, also encourages tax avoidance. To avoid the high corporate tax rate, several US corporations have shifted their headquarters to other countries or they have not repatriated their foreign profits back to the US.

Lower tax avoidance may be one reason why Singapore may be able to maintain healthy finances even with lower tax rates.

In addition to redistribution, tax policy is also an instrument for encouraging particular behaviours.

High taxes on car ownership and usage, for instance, are not only for generating revenues but also for discouraging the ownership and usage of personal transport. That the revenue generated can be used to subsidise public transport is an added benefit, which is a form of redistribution that is tangible but less visible than direct handouts.

Though I did not visit Singapore 50 years ago, what I have seen in 25 years of acquaintance with Singapore is that the Government has become increasingly egalitarian by helping lower-income groups, especially when we recognise that factors beyond progressive taxes on personal income and direct handouts can promote egalitarianism.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Nitin Pangarkar is an associate professor in the Department of Strategy and Policy at the National University of Singapore Business School.

The World Bank can play a bigger global role

It should rise above politics and take on pressing global "public" problems such as the impact of climate change

Vinod Thomas

For The Straits Times

New leadership at the World Bank following the surprise resignation of its president, Dr Jim Yong Kim, is an opportunity for the largest multilateral development bank to strengthen its global reach and impact.

Beyond fighting poverty, the World Bank must become a true agent of development change that works with low-, middle- and high-income countries to tackle the dangers of climate change, widening income gaps and hindrances to open world trade.

But getting this agenda under way would be stalled at the start if the Trump nominee for the presidency, Treasury Undersecretary David Malpass, is put there mainly to backpedal on climate change and check the rise of China.

His nomination earlier this month also reinforces the clubby arrangement of an American always heading the World Bank. This way of choosing the chief of a multilateral agency – and a European leading the International Monetary Fund – is deeply flawed, not least because these institutions advise countries to follow merit-based and competitive governance.

The big question is whether the bank itself – a giant of an institution with 189 member countries and 15,000 staff – can rise above the politics and seize this moment of change for global development.

And how the World Bank approaches this will have far-reaching consequences for multilateral and bilateral financing, given the dominant size of its lending – US$67 billion (S$90 billion) in fiscal year 2018, a third of it going to Asia (East and South).

Independent evaluations point to the successes and failures in the World Bank's support to countries. Over the past quarter-century, extreme poverty has fallen by half, with East and South-east Asia, and especially China, leading the long-term decline in poverty.

The bank's support for open trade and market reforms can take some of the credit for helping countries deliver growth and poverty reduction. But it should also take some of the blame for the costly neglect of the environment and climate change that accompanied the charge for growth.

A worry about Mr Malpass, who has been a sceptic of climate actions, is that he may not drive the bank's plan to lend US$200 billion over the next five years to fight climate change.

The development agenda for a global bank is best guided by economist John Maynard Keynes' thought that the role of government is not to do what the private sector does, regardless of whether it does it a little better or a little worse; what it should do are those things that are not being done at all.

Global "public" problems such as environment damage, deficiencies in basic health and education, and gaps in infrastructure are essential areas where the private sector vastly under-invests.

The World Bank has a vital role in these causes – provided its support is efficient and effective.

But to stay relevant, the World Bank needs to move beyond being a lender for development by coupling financing with its skills and expertise in today's most pressing problems of rapid urbanisation, alarming demographic shifts and climate change. Improving governance and tackling corruption are guaranteed silver bullets for progress in these areas.

The World Bank's involvement in policy discussions with governments, and its ability to provide solutions, means it can make a crucial difference.

Moving in this direction will also help the bank to have a truly global clientele, including China, which is set to reach high-income status, and other high-income countries like Japan, Singapore and the United States.

According to independent evaluation, China has used borrowing for development more effectively than most countries. The nomination of Mr Malpass, a long-time critic of bank lending to China, seems to be part of the move to contain China.

But there is an argument for keeping higher-income countries, which, under current policies, "graduate" from being bank clients as they reach high-income status. Their continued presence can add value, not necessarily in terms of their borrowing money from the bank, but for their role in sharing lessons learnt along their development path, which could be valuable for low- and middle-income countries.

This knowledge role raises the possibility that the bank can become a truly global institution that works with all countries, regardless of income levels.

One way to enable the World Bank to tackle the next wave of development challenges – irrespective of who is at the helm as president – is to strengthen its board of directors with highly regarded, more development leaders from the member countries who can provide checks and balances to the presidency because of the intellectual and political weight they carry.

The board plans to name a new president prior to the IMF and World Bank meetings, set for April 12 to 14 in Washington. Till then, nominations for the top post are open till March 14.

If US President Donald Trump's choice is not to result in the bank primarily serving American interests, its independence needs to be vastly strengthened.

The board, comprising 25 directors, has increasingly been made up of bureaucrats from member countries. As a counterbalance to the president who chairs the board, there needs to be a strong board giving cohesive leadership for the bank's programme.

The World Bank's new president inherits a capable organisation staffed with deep skills in multiple areas of development.

But to deliver on its mandate, the bank must refocus attention on the global public problems that are critical to development, blend its offering of financing with knowledge, and broaden its country coverage to be a truly global development institution.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Vinod Thomas is a former senior vice-president for independent evaluation at the World Bank, and co-author of Multilateral Bank And The Development Process.

Pedestrians walking past the World Bank building in Washington. To stay relevant, the World Bank needs to move beyond being a lender for development by coupling financing with its skills and expertise in today's most pressing problems of rapid urbanisation, alarming demographic shifts and climate change. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China isn't having enough babies

Can the state keep up with the rapid ageing of such a large population?

Wang Feng and Yong Cai

Fewer babies were born in China last year than in 2017, and already fewer had been born in 2017 than in 2016.

There were 15.23 million new births last year, down by more than 11 per cent from the year before.

The authorities had predicted that easing and then abolishing the one-child policy in the mid-2010s would trigger a baby boom.

It has been more like a baby bust.

No, these figures do not mean that China's population itself has started to decline. But they do mean that the population overall is ageing, and fast. And they mean that the Chinese government can no longer manipulate fertility with blunt pro-natal policies. The reasons for the drop run too deep.

Instead of a futile, retrograde statist intervention in people's reproductive choices, the authorities should undertake broad economic and social reforms to address the deep causes of the decline while mitigating the burdens of its worst effects.

Fertility in China started dropping, and rapidly, in the late 1960s – long before 1980, the year the government officially put the one-child policy in place.

As with other countries, the reasons included improved survival for infants and children, and women's increased participation in the labour force.

And the factors that are driving down fertility today, such as mass urbanisation, greater wealth and more choices for women, are here to stay.

Several decades of internal migration have brought half a billion people into the cities.

Six out of 10 Chinese now live in urban areas, compared with two in 10 four decades ago.

In 1990, only 3 per cent of college-age Chinese attended college. In 2015, the number was more than 40 per cent for men and 45 per cent for women.

Today, Chinese women – armed with new knowledge, living independently in vibrant cities and determined to pursue their own goals – are less likely than previous generations to let their personal and reproductive decisions be influenced by pressure from the state or their families.

In 1990, virtually every woman in China was married by the age of 30, according to official census data. In 2015, one in 10 women had not married by 30. In Shanghai, it was one in five.

Low fertility has its benefits. Fewer children probably means that more attention is paid to them, including in the form of more investment in education.

China's population may be older overall, but it is also wealthier, a fact that has brought new economic opportunities, such as healthcare-related products and services, and greater spending on leisure.

The declining size of the workforce and rising labour costs together drive up demand for labour-saving technologies, from automation to artificial intelligence.

But fertility in China has dropped even as life expectancy has increased, and that combination has translated into the population's ageing overall – which, in turn, has meant an increasing economic burden on working-age people.

Since 2010, the number of Chinese people between the ages of 20 and 24, for example, dropped by about 30 per cent (from more than 127 million to about 90 million), even as the number of people aged 60 and above increased by almost 39 per cent (from 180 million to nearly 250 million).

Based on our analysis of official statistics and other population data, we estimate that by 2030, the 20-to-24 age group will shrink by another 20 per cent (to around 73 million), while the 60-plus category will grow by 56 per cent (and reach 390 million). By then, Chinese people 60 and older will account for more than one-quarter of the total population.

These changing demographics create major political tests for China's leaders, present and future.

One is how to maintain growth as the population keeps ageing and the workforce's relative size keeps shrinking.

Another is how to deliver the economic and social benefits that Chinese people now expect from the state.

Based on official Chinese statistics, we estimate that China's public spending on education, healthcare and pensions has increased from 6.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2007 to 11.6 per cent of GDP in 2016 – faster than spending on military or domestic security programmes.

Assuming that China simply maintains welfare benefits at current levels, the population's ageing could push up public spending on education, healthcare and pensions from 10 per cent today to 17 per cent of China's GDP by 2035, and then 23 per cent by 2050 – that is the share of GDP for all government spending today.

Should China increase welfare benefits in line with high-income countries – a stated aspiration of the Chinese leadership – they could take up to 32 per cent of the GDP by 2050.

Unless the Chinese government can increase tax revenues, it will be left with little to spend on other stated priorities, like its Belt and Road Initiative or military expansion.

Moreover, the results of greater expenditures have been uneven so far.

Spending on education heavily favours the urban elites.

Reimbursement rates for healthcare vary widely according to one's social status. The average pension payment is less than US$10 (S$13.50) per month for a rural elderly person but nearly US$500 for a retired civil servant.

A scare last summer over delayed payments in one rust-belt province was a fresh warning that China's pension system, which is organised by both region and employment sector, is too fragmented to be reliable and struggling to keep up with the population's ageing.

Education and healthcare, two sectors over which the government has tremendous control, are among the most inefficient in China.

China's educational system is hyper-competitive, yet it is not turning out the most creative or productive workers. Education is also very expensive, which may dissuade parents from having children.

So, too, with high housing costs.

The Chinese government urgently needs to address these mounting demographic pressures with systemic reforms.

It must provide adequate childcare and equal access to public education, and ensure quality in healthcare.

It should postpone the retirement age (currently 55 for women and 60 for men) and nationalise pension standards.

More broadly, it needs to promote social equality, especially gender equality, and a work-life balance.

Two generations of Chinese, many of them raised as the only child, have experienced China's prosperity. And if their parents and grandparents hoped that the state could provide food and shelter, they now expect safe medicine, clean air, adequate healthcare and decent pensions.

The Chinese leadership's political legitimacy is on the line.

For decades, China mortgaged its population for the sake of economic growth.

It is payback time. NYTIMES

• Wang Feng is professor of sociology at the University of California, Irvine. Yong Cai is associate professor of sociology and a fellow at the Carolina Population Centre, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Nurses massaging babies at an infant care centre in Chongqing, China. There were 15.23 million new births last year, down by more than 11 per cent from the year before. The factors that are driving down fertility today, such as mass urbanisation, greater wealth and more choices for women, are here to stay. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

In defence of the gerontocracy

Frank Bruni

Ms Dianne Feinstein doesn't get it. How could she? She's 85. Ancient.

She has had too many decades to resign herself to the status quo, and she won't be around to watch the fires rage and the oceans boil. Step aside, Granny. Sturdier legs will lead the way.

That was the subtext – actually, that was the text – of the California senator's clash with schoolchildren in her San Francisco office last week, as they lamented her coolness towards the Green New Deal and she pushed back that she knows a thing or two.

She's right. She does. And while that's largely a function of smarts, it's also a function of age.

The building blocks of wisdom are experiences, which come only with the passage of time.

Ms Nancy Pelosi is 78. There was a lot of hand-wringing about that in the build-up to the midterms. I participated in it, joining many younger Democrats who questioned her determination to become House Speaker. How about some fresh energy and new blood?

Thank heaven she swatted us away, because she smacks down President Donald Trump more effectively than any other politician, and the reasons include her poise and steel, the kind forged by many battles over many years. They accrue as wrinkles do, with long exposure to the elements.

Is the Democratic Party too long in the tooth and grey at the temples? You bet.

The leading contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination include Mr Bernie Sanders, 77, Ms Elizabeth Warren, 69, and – if he runs – Mr Joe Biden, 76. That's worrisome.

In the past century, the United States has never elected a first-term Democratic president over the age of 52. Plenty of pundits have noted that.

The No. 2 and No. 3 Democrats in the House – Mr Steny Hoyer and Mr James Clyburn – are 79 and 78.

That concentrates one generation's sensibility and perspective at the summit, and, strategically speaking, the optics aren't optimal.

So it's good that the party recently seeded the stratum just below them with younger lawmakers and that many newly elected Democrats are well under 50.

With age as well as gender and race, diversity matters.

But the attention to age can go too far. It degrades the virtues of oldsters. It romanticises the dewiness of youngsters. Sure, Ms Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's youth (she's 29) is crucial to the passion in her voice, the ambition of her ideas and her ability to rouse a contingent of young voters who too often go missing from politics.

But it probably also contributes to her heedlessness – to how cavalier she can be with facts. (Not that we don't have a 72-year-old President who surpasses her in this regard.)

At 37, Mr Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, is the youngest of the candidates to jump into the 2020 presidential race, and he is trying to turn his age to his advantage, arguing that he grew up with mass shootings in schools and that his generation will inherit the full consequences of climate change.

But there was gun violence galore before Columbine, Newtown and Parkland. Senator Feinstein can attest to that. She was at San Francisco City Hall on the November 1978 day when Mayor George Moscone and her fellow city supervisor Harvey Milk were fatally shot. She reached Mr Milk's body first, one of her fingers slipping into a bullet hole in his neck when she checked for a pulse.

And during her quarter-century in the Senate, almost no lawmaker of any age has been a more insistent crusader for restrictions on firearms.

As for the notion that young voters and politicians care more about the future because they have more skin in the game: Show me even one decent parent who doesn't vote with his or her children in mind. Show me one decent grandparent.

I can't see how anyone would invest so much time, money and heart in a child's tomorrow only to ignore that future in the political realm.

Characterisations of Congress as a gerontocracy are often accompanied by complaints about the ruinous gluttony of the baby boom generation, which encompasses people from about Mr Trump's age down to mine, 54.

We're rightly charged with befouling the environment, running up the debt and letting the American dream slip away from the middle class.

But you know what else baby boomers did? Helped bring an end to the Vietnam War. Advanced the causes of equality for women, for black people and for LGBT Americans. Engineered the digital revolution. If we're not the dynamos we once were, maybe it's not because we're sanguine or jaded. We could just be pooped.

Or we could just be seasoned, because part of what you discover on the far side of 50 is that aspirations and ardour carry you only so far. ("The Green Dream," Ms Pelosi dismissively called it.)

Progress ultimately comes from a deep understanding of systems and a thorough familiarity with the most tedious details. That's what Ms Pelosi has, and it's what she had nearly a decade ago, at 69, when she last served as House Speaker and pulled Obamacare across the finish line. Could she have done that at 49?

It's best to have plenty of younger politicians in the mix: It's only from a multiplicity of perspectives that some problems – and some solutions – come clearly into view.

And older generations need younger ones to reconnect them with their idealism. But younger generations need older ones to turn that idealism into more than pretty words.

They need the moral authority reserved for people who've done so much loving, so much losing and so much figuring out how to press on. They need the life lessons, which have grown from a pamphlet to an encyclopaedia. What a waste not to read every last syllable of it. NYTIMES

BIG PICTURE

WEATHER
Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 34 deg C **Low** 25 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 7pm yesterday: 30 to 53 (Moderate)

PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Whale of a mystery

Marine biologists in Brazil were shocked to find a dead humpback whale in a mangrove on Marajo Island, in the Amazon River, last Friday.

Government officials told news outlets that the 8m-long whale had been dead for several days.

While tens of thousands of humpback whales spend part of the year feeding off the coast of Brazil, they migrate south during this time of the year to feed near Antarctica.

Members of the conservation group Bicho D'Agua found the whale after following vultures that were circling overhead.

"We imagine it was floating and the tide took it into the mangrove," Dr Renata Emin, president of Bicho D'Agua, told Brazilian news site G1. "The question is: What was a humpback whale doing in the month of February on the northern coast of Brazil? It is unusual."

Scientists examined the carcass at the weekend to figure out how the whale died and took samples for a necropsy, the group said.

B

HOME

AUGUSTIN LEE
MINISTRY OF MANPOWER DEPUTY SECRETARY IS NEXT CEO OF CPF BOARD **B3**

Last year, 107,771 contraband cases were detected at Singapore's checkpoints, the highest annual figure recorded, up from 90,327 the year before. PHOTOS: FACEBOOK/SINGAPORE CUSTOMS, IMMIGRATION AND CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY

Record 300 contraband cases a day detected at checkpoints

107,771 cases in 2018 a rise of 19%, mainly due to more caught at land checkpoints

Fabian Koh

There were 107,771 contraband cases detected at Singapore's checkpoints last year, a 19 per cent climb from 90,327 the year before.

It averages out to about 300 cases a day last year.

This is the highest annual figure recorded, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) said yesterday in its annual report.

The agency said this was mainly due to a rise in contraband cases detected at the land checkpoints.

ICA Commissioner Marvin Sim said the agency cleared more than 212 million travellers, and 10 million consignments, containers and parcels last year.

"Even with stringent checks and high penalties, attempts to smuggle contraband items into Singapore have persisted," he said.

He stressed that ICA officers cannot let up on security checks, "even when the checkpoints are congested".

According to the report, lorries and heavy commercial vehicles continued to be one of the most common modes of transport for contraband items, a trend which ICA found to be of concern.

This is due to the sheer size of such vehicles; this allows large quantities of contraband items, or security-sensitive materials such as toxic industrial chemicals and explosives, to be concealed within the consignments or in secret compartments, said the ICA.

To address some of these challenges, ICA introduced radiographic scanners to scan cargo vehicles, and implemented bus scan-

FALL IN SOME AREAS continued on B2

10 years' jail for doctor who sexually assaulted patient

Wee Teong Boo was also convicted of a charge of molesting the victim during a consultation in November 2015. ST PHOTO: LEE JIA WEN

Court also orders him to pay $1,200 in compensation for victim's therapy sessions

Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

General practitioner Wee Teong Boo was sentenced to 10 years' jail yesterday for sexually assaulting and molesting a 23-year-old patient at his Bedok clinic during two medical examinations, one month apart, in late 2015.

Wee, 68, was also ordered to pay compensation of $1,200 for therapy sessions to help the victim cope with the psychological effects of the sexual abuse.

Citing the victim's testimony during the trial, Deputy Public Prosecutor Sharmila Sripathy-Shanaz said the woman experienced a "purgatory of confusion, anger and emptiness" in the aftermath of the sexual assault. The victim told the court she was "living (like) the walking dead" for a long time.

"I cannot register why, why is it that (out of) so many patients, I am the one being picked for this?" she said. "Why is it a doctor can become a beast overnight?" she asked.

She testified that she does not see male doctors any more and cannot accept physical intimacy with men.

Wee did not display any emotion in court. He maintains his innocence and will be appealing against his conviction, his lawyer Edmond Pereira told the court.

The doctor was originally charged with one count each of rape and molestation. He fought the charges in a trial that ran between April and October last year.

The High Court on Monday cleared him of the rape charge, convicting him instead of sexual assault by penetration, based on the doctor's own admission that he had inserted his ungloved fingers into the patient, using saliva as a lubricant.

This was after Justice Chua Lee Ming accepted medical evidence that Wee was suffering from erectile dysfunction at the time of the offences. The judge said there was reasonable doubt as to whether penile penetration could have taken place as alleged.

A spokesman for the Attorney-General's Chambers said the prosecution will be appealing against the acquittal on the rape charge and the sentence meted out by the court.

The DPP had called for a total sentence of 12 years and seven months' jail. This included an additional three-month term in lieu of caning, as Wee is more than 50 years old.

"Unsupervised and unrestrained, Dr Wee gravely abused his position of trust and authority as a medical professional to deceive and take advantage of his patient, preying on her vulnerability and trust to indulge his own perverse, hedonistic sexual desires," said DPP Sharmila.

"He has undermined every code and ethic known to the medical profession."

She noted that Wee showed a lack of remorse and ran a "scurrilous defence" at trial.

The DPP pointed out that he had maligned the integrity of prosecution witnesses, including the doctor who examined the victim at the KK Women's and Children's Hospital, and called the police "stupid".

During his trial, Wee claimed he had inserted his fingers into the patient to conduct an internal examination in December 2015 as he suspected that she could be suffering from pelvic inflammatory disease.

But Justice Chua rejected the claims. He concluded that there was no medical basis for such an examination and the patient did not consent to the actions.

Among other things, Wee claimed he forgot to use gloves and proper lubricant, and forgot to ask the patient if she needed a chaperone, which are basic requirements, because he was "caught off guard" when she complained of a genital itch.

Wee was also convicted of a second charge of molesting the victim during an earlier consultation in November 2015.

Sexual assault by penetration carries the same prescribed sentence as rape – jail of up to 20 years, with caning or a fine.

selinal@sph.com.sg

Khaw says he's fully prepared for surgery tomorrow

Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan, who is warded in Singapore General Hospital, fractured his left arm in a fall last week, and is on extended medical leave. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/KHAW BOON WAN

Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan will be undergoing surgery on his fractured left arm tomorrow.

Mr Khaw, 66, thanked well-wishers in a Facebook post yesterday, adding that he was fully prepared for the upcoming surgery.

He said he would have to be patient in convalescing, as "the bones' recovery can take several weeks".

"I'm in the best of hands and looking forward to a full recovery," he added.

Mr Khaw is warded in Singapore General Hospital.

In his post, Mr Khaw said his accident at home was a timely reminder that it was important for senior citizens to "never jump out of bed".

"At our age, it's important to get up, pump the heart, stand up, feel that you are steady before taking the first step," he said.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Monday that Mr Khaw was on extended medical leave after fracturing his left arm in a fall last week.

He will resume duties when he is able to do so, probably after several weeks, the PMO said in a statement.

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, 58, has stepped in as Acting Transport Minister while Mr Khaw recovers from his injury, to ensure that ongoing discussions with Malaysia on several transport matters will continue to be well coordinated, the statement added.

On Monday, the PMO said that senior ministers of state for transport Lam Pin Min and Janil Puthucheary, together with Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Baey Yam Keng, will help Dr Balakrishnan in the parliamentary debate on the spending plans of the Transport Ministry.

The other MPs in Mr Khaw's Sembawang GRC will be covering his duties in the constituency.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and Health Amrin Amin, one of his fellow Sembawang GRC MPs, was at Mr Khaw's Meet-the-People session on Monday evening.

Mr Vikram Nair will be covering next Monday's session.

Choo Yun Ting

Fewer immigration offenders arrested

FROM B1

ners at Tuas Checkpoint last year.

The agency also revealed yesterday that there was a 13 per cent increase in the number of harbourers and employers of immigration offenders caught, from 300 in 2017 to 340 last year.

The majority of harbourers and employers were Singaporeans or permanent residents above 50 years old who failed to properly check foreigners' immigration statuses so they could earn money from rental fees.

To tackle this issue, ICA engages community partners such as home owners and estate agents, spreads anti-harbouring messages through outreach events, and distributes the ICA Homeowner's Guide in community clubs and Housing Board branch offices.

Meanwhile, the number of immigration offenders arrested fell 8.9 per cent to 1,071 last year, with a drop in both the number of illegal immigrants and overstayers arrested.

ICA conducted an average of more than 100 enforcement raids monthly.

Most of the immigration offenders were in maintenance and construction work.

ICA explained that immigration offenders are a security risk as they "may resort to crimes to sustain their livelihood", and denying them shelter and jobs would deter them from coming to Singapore.

Last year saw 32 people convicted of offences related to marriages of convenience, a decrease of about 40 per cent from the previous year.

Mr Sim said: "As the global security threat remains high, ICA must spare no effort to secure our borders, even as we facilitate the entry and exit of increasing volumes of travellers and cargo."

fabkoh@sph.com.sg

TIGHT SECURITY NEEDED

As the global security threat remains high, ICA must spare no effort to secure our borders, even as we facilitate the entry and exit of increasing volumes of travellers and cargo.

ICA COMMISSIONER MARVIN SIM

ICA annual statistics 2018

Immigration offenders arrested

	2017	2018	
Illegal immigrants	186	131	
Overstayers	990	940	
Total	**1,176**	**1,071**	▼ 8.9%

Harbourers and employers of immigration offenders arrested

	2017	2018	
Harbourers	252	282	
Employers	48	58	
Total	**300**	**340**	▲ 13%

Contraband cases detected at checkpoints

	2017	2018	
Total	**90,327**	**107,771**	▲ 19%

People convicted for offences related to marriages of convenience

	2017	2018	
Total	**53**	**32**	▼ 40%

Source: IMMIGRATION AND CHECKPOINTS AUTHORITY STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Expect haze, burning smell in S'pore if Johor fires persist

Choo Yun Ting

A fire in southern Johor, which was the likely cause of the burning smell reported by Singaporeans earlier this week, has been put out, the National Environment Agency (NEA) said yesterday.

However, a second hot spot was detected in Johor, about 50km to the east and north-east of Singapore, on Tuesday. The smoke plume from the hot spot was blown south-west by the prevailing north-easterly winds, the environment agency said.

The NEA said it received feedback about a burning smell in many parts of Singapore on Tuesday. It added that haze and a burning smell may be expected in Singapore if the fires in Johor continue.

The earlier incident was the result of a hot spot in southern Johor, 30km east of Singapore. Residents had, between Sunday evening and Monday morning, complained of a burning smell.

The Department of Environment (Johor) later informed the NEA that there was a fire in Punggai, near Bandar Penawar, in the vicinity of an oil palm plantation.

The fire was due to the hot weather in parts of Johor.

In an update, NEA said firemen from Bandar Penawar managed to put out the fire after efforts in the past few days and with rain falling on Tuesday. However, around 20 per cent of the surrounding area remains smoky.

The NEA said that February is normally a dry month for the surrounding region, and extended periods of dry weather can lead to land and vegetation fires.

The Pollutant Standards Index across Singapore ranged from 31 to 52, in the "good" to "moderate" range, as of 8pm yesterday.

The one-hour PM2.5 readings ranged from seven to 21 micrograms per cubic metre, which is in the "normal" range. PM2.5 is the dominant pollutant during haze episodes.

The NEA said yesterday that members of the public can continue with their normal activities.

"We are closely monitoring the air quality and will provide updates on any significant changes to the air quality situation," the agency said.

yuntingc@sph.com.sg

Accessible cancer care, screenings for those in need

Cancer centre, society in $2.6m partnership to identify patients likely to be at risk

Rei Kurohi

National Cancer Centre Singapore medical director William Hwang (left) and Singapore Cancer Society chief executive Albert Ching at the signing of a memorandum of understanding yesterday. PHOTO: NATIONAL CANCER CENTRE SINGAPORE

The National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) and the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) have announced a partnership that aims to make cancer detection, prevention and treatment more accessible to patients who require financial aid.

Representatives from both organisations signed a memorandum of understanding at the NCCS building next to the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) yesterday.

Under the agreement, NCCS and SCS will launch a genetic screening programme to identify patients with a genetic predisposition to cancer, said NCCS medical director William Hwang.

A total of $2.6 million will be co-funded by NCCS and SCS to support the programme over the next three years.

Prof Hwang said the programme will extend subsidised screenings and prevention measures to patients' families, who are more likely to be at risk.

"Currently, the cancer genetics team at NCCS sees about a hundred patients a week, but the needs are actually far more than that," he said.

An estimated 500 patients seen at NCCS each year have a genetic predisposition for cancer.

The programme is expected to benefit more than 400 patients this year and almost 800 patients in 2021, about a quarter of whom are expected to require financial aid.

Community Health Assist Scheme card holders can get up to $1,000 a year in financial assistance under the programme.

Associate Professor Joanne Ngeow, who heads the Cancer Genetics Service at NCCS, said: "In one in 10 cancer patients, regardless of the sub-type, the genetic factor is the predominant reason why they have a significantly higher risk of cancer compared to the generation population, a six to tenfold increased risk."

There are currently more than 400 known cancer predisposition syndromes, Prof Ngeow said.

She added: "Extensive research has shown that if we monitor these patients carefully with increased or earlier imaging, or surveillance like colonoscopies, they do as well as patients without a genetic predisposition."

Taking a genetic test costs just under $1,000 and is an out-of-pocket expense for most patients.

Prof Hwang said many patients are deterred by the high costs of follow-up procedures such as regular scans, blood tests and annual colonoscopies, even after they are found to have a genetic predisposition.

Some may allow their cancer screenings to lapse, resulting in later detection and increased medical costs in the long term.

"We are trying to remove the cost barrier for patients, which can not only cause many more problems for themselves, but also creates a burden on the healthcare system as well," he said.

SCS chief executive Albert Ching said that the society, a voluntary welfare organisation which is currently based in Tanjong Pagar, will share the new NCCS building when it opens on the SGH campus in 2022.

The move will make it easier for cancer patients to get support before, during and after treatment, such as financial aid, welfare, rehabilitation or hospice care, said Mr Ching.

Besides the screening programme, NCCS and SCS will continue to collaborate on cancer education and prevention events, such as campaigns, road shows and exhibitions.

rei@sph.com.sg

MOM deputy secretary to be new CPF Board chief

Ng Huiwen

The Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board will get a new chief on April 1, as Mr Ng Chee Peng steps down after 30 years in public service.

Current Ministry of Manpower (MOM) deputy secretary Augustin Lee, 47, will succeed Mr Ng, 48, as chief executive.

In a statement yesterday, MOM thanked Mr Ng for his leadership.

Mr Aubeck Kam, Permanent Secretary for Manpower, said that under Mr Ng, the CPF Board provided members greater assurance in their retirement, improved members' service experience, enhanced the board's digital shopfront and deepened engagement with members.

"The Ministry of Manpower would like to put on record its appreciation to Chee Peng for his leadership of CPF Board," he said.

Mr Ng's career in the public service began in 1989, when he was awarded the President's Scholarship and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Overseas Scholarship.

Besides being on the CPF Board, he held previous appointments as chief of staff-joint staff in the SAF and chief of navy.

Since he joined the CPF Board in March 2015, Mr Ng has spearheaded the implementation of policy initiatives recommended by the CPF Advisory Panel.

These include options to help CPF members grow their retirement savings and receive payouts that better meet their retirement needs, as well as greater flexibility to transfer their CPF balances to loved ones.

He also led the board in a digital transformation journey to improve members' service experience.

The CPF Board became the first government agency to implement the use of PayNow in its services.

Mr Augustin Lee (left) will succeed Mr Ng Chee Peng as chief executive of the CPF Board. Mr Ng is stepping down after 30 years in public service.

With PayNow, CPF members who have turned 55 can make withdrawals conveniently using their mobile devices, and can receive their money within minutes.

The board also inaugurated the use of call authentication for its call services in March 2017.

This enables members to receive personal information over the phone in a convenient and secure manner.

The "my cpf" mobile application and "my cpf" e-Services profile page were revamped to provide an enhanced user interface and personalised experience for members.

In addition, during Mr Ng's tenure, the CPF Board introduced annual CPF retirement planning campaigns and road shows, as well as new social media channels to help Singaporeans better prepare for retirement.

The board also implemented a number of initiatives, such as the revamped CPF yearly statement of accounts and the CPF Retirement Planning Service.

Mr Ng's successor, Mr Lee, has held various appointments at the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Trade and Industry.

He was also the principal private secretary to then Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong. He joined MOM as deputy secretary in 2010.

Mr Lee graduated from the National University of Singapore with bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering.

He also holds a Master of Science degree in management from Stanford University in the United States.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg

100 events to mark bicentennial

Melody Zaccheus
Heritage and Community Correspondent

The Nagore Dargah Indian Muslim Heritage Centre, which has almost two centuries of history, is curating a photo exhibition which matches photographs of 100 Singaporeans with their ancestors.

These images, to be displayed side by side, will help tell the story of how their ancestors settled here, the sacrifices they made and the successes they had. The showcase will be launched on March 23.

The exhibition, From Singapore To Singaporean – Pioneers And Descendants, is one of more than 100 events and projects created by people and organisations to uncover stories of the Republic's past as it marks its bicentenary.

The Singapore Bicentennial Office said yesterday that the projects involve more than 280 partners, including community groups, religious institutions and clans.

It added that the year-long commemoration is "an opportunity for Singaporeans to find personal connections to the past and discover more about our longer history by piecing together the stories of our shared journey".

Other partners include the Goh Loo Club, which, together with the Tan Kah Kee Foundation, has lined up cultural seminars, and the Eurasian Association, which is 100 this year and has planned activities such as a Eurasian Festival.

Meanwhile, the longer history of Singapore will be presented at five road shows taking place islandwide, a collaboration between the five community development councils and the Singapore Bicentennial Office. The road shows kick off in April at Wisma Geylang Serai and will be held at the other four districts in subsequent months.

The road shows will be complemented by a series of projects supported by the People's Association that cover the place histories of different regions in Singapore.

Manpower Minister Josephine Teo, co-chairman of the ministerial steering committee for the Singapore Bicentennial Office, said it was grateful for the many people and communities who came forward to share their history.

She said: "Throughout our history, many individuals and communities gave back to society in various ways – by building places of worship, hospitals, schools and more. The pioneers of independent Singapore, too, found ways to contribute, be it through monetary donations or voluntary service."

She also referred to the $200 million Bicentennial Community Fund, announced by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat in his Budget speech last week. The fund will match, dollar for dollar, donations that are garnered by Institutions of a Public Character this year.

Mrs Teo said: "We hope to inspire more corporates and individuals to care and share, in the same spirit of our forefathers' generosity."

melodyz@sph.com.sg

Budget 2019 debate

FromTheBackbench

DR LIM WEE KIAK (Sembawang GRC)

Have a climate change law

Singapore should put its money where its mouth is, and have laws to ensure that citizens keep to carbon emission and other environment-related goals.

Dr Lim said the country should go the route of Britain, Norway and even Malaysia which have enacted such legislation, and enact a law to "enshrine our commitment to mitigate climate change".

Other suggestions he gave are incentives for private property owners to install solar panels, changing the design of Housing Board bins to encourage more people to recycle, and installing more charging points for electric cars.

MS SYLVIA LIM (Aljunied GRC)

Allow instalments for composition fines

More compassion can be shown in the settlement of fines, and law enforcement agencies could consider allowing offenders to pay the composition amount in instalments, said Ms Lim.

Highlighting the challenges facing the vulnerable segments of the workforce, such as lower-income residents who do gig economy work, Ms Lim said such jobs hardly offer any employee benefits.

Such workers have "less ability to withstand the vicissitudes of life".

She related a case of a single mother of three, who delivered food on a motorcycle and was fined $200 for beating the red light in a moment of inattention.

Ms Lim said the mother was unable to pay, and she found the funds to help her.

DR INTAN AZURA MOKHTAR (Ang Mo Kio GRC)

Help firms hire those with special needs

Those with special needs and mental health conditions should enjoy equal opportunities to be employed, be financially independent and contribute to the economy, said Dr Intan.

She suggested incentives for firms which hire people from such vulnerable groups, including wage offsets and tax reliefs.

Having wage support may also allow such employees to have flexible work arrangements, as they may need time and space to adjust to their work environment and commitments, she noted. "Being gainfully employed is a start in helping those with special needs or with mental health challenges live independently... It accords sufficient opportunities to develop that much-needed self-belief and self-dignity," she added.

NOMINATED MP TERENCE HO

Digitalise the arts to be more inclusive

Harnessing technology and innovation is key to ensuring that the arts and culture continue to be relevant to audiences, and for them to become a part of the lives of Singaporeans, said Mr Ho.

The National Museum of Singapore, for example, has been using digital technology to enhance visitors' experience, while the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, where Mr Ho is executive director, has been streaming concerts live to audiences at home and internationally.

Mr Ho said more partnerships can be built among art and culture groups, technology companies and academia to create more of such digitalised programmes. He also called for the arts to be made more accessible and inclusive in Singapore.

Baey: Diesel tax hike for better living environment

The annual special tax for taxis has been reduced by $850, and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Baey Yam Keng said he was glad that all the taxi operators have pledged to pass on the entire savings to cabbies in the form of rental reductions and, for some, Medisave top-ups. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

Lower special tax for cabs, new rebate scheme for diesel buses among ways to cushion impact

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

While the tax hike on diesel has affected businesses and cabbies, the move will help discourage usage of the fuel and create a better and healthier living environment, said Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Baey Yam Keng.

He noted that the land transport sector is the second-largest source of emissions in Singapore, and this has to be addressed as the land transport system expands.

To do so, the Government is also promoting commuting modes such as car-sharing, trains and personal mobility devices, managing vehicle growth and usage, and encouraging the adoption of cleaner and more carbon-efficient vehicles, he said.

MPs Lee Bee Wah (Nee Soon GRC) and Gan Thiam Poh (Ang Mo Kio GRC) yesterday raised concerns about the hike, as they called for more support to mitigate the impact on cabbies and businesses.

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat had announced a doubling in excise duty on diesel fuel from 10 cents a litre to 20 cents last week. This took effect from Feb 18.

Yesterday, Ms Lee pointed out that no lead time or grace period was given, and many service providers which use diesel vehicles have lost money overnight. She called for ComfortDelGro, the largest taxi operator here, to at least absorb part of the diesel tax hike.

Meanwhile, Mr Gan said certain heavy machinery and special purpose vehicles have no diesel alternatives in the market, and appealed for firms and operators using them to be exempted from the hike.

In his speech, Mr Baey listed several ways in which the Government is helping to cushion the impact of the diesel tax increase.

The annual special tax for taxis has been reduced by $850, and Mr Baey said he was glad that all taxi operators have pledged to pass on the entire savings to cabbies in the form of rental reductions and, for some, Medisave top-ups.

ComfortDelGro cabbies driving a diesel taxi that is five years or older can get a $100 voucher if they convert to a hybrid taxi by the end of next month, he added, urging other taxi operators to offer similar incentives and more non-diesel options.

On concerns from parents about school bus fares, Mr Baey said the Government is helping operators through a new road tax rebate scheme for all diesel buses, for a three-year period from August.

All diesel school buses, diesel private-hire buses and excursion buses ferrying schoolchildren will also get an additional cash rebate for three years from August.

Mr Ang Hin Kee (Ang Mo Kio GRC) said after the sitting that he hoped more taxi firms would take up Mr Baey's call to support cabbies.

But the National Taxi Association's executive adviser added that rebates like the $100 voucher from ComfortDelGro offer only slight reprieve to taxi drivers, as the daily rental rate for a hybrid taxi is $120, compared with $100 for a diesel taxi.

"Taxi firms should look into lowering the rental rates. If not, cabbies may not switch to hybrid taxis, and instead clock longer hours and distances on their diesel cabs to cover the higher diesel rates.

"This runs contrary to the intention of the tax hike," Mr Ang said.

adrianl@sph.com.sg

SEE OPINION A24

Planned GST hike not enough to meet future needs: Sitoh

Ng Jun Sen
Business Correspondent

The planned GST increase is but one measure to meet rising spending needs, and will not be able to meet them in full, Mr Sitoh Yih Pin (Potong Pasir) said yesterday.

The Goods and Services Tax, currently at 7 per cent, is estimated to bring in $11.69 billion in the coming financial year. The rise in the tax rate by 2 percentage points to 9 per cent, sometime between 2021 and 2025, is expected to bring in an estimated $3.3 billion more in revenue, at best, he said.

Mr Sitoh, an accountant, turned to numbers to make his case on the need for prudence. Spending on an ageing population and expanding and renewing infrastructure is rising, he said in the final speech on day two of the Budget debate.

The Health Ministry's expenditure rose three-fold in 10 years, from $3.8 billion in Financial Year 2009 to an estimated $11.7 billion for FY 2019, he noted. Overall Government spending has risen from $57 billion in FY 2009 to a projected $80.25 billion in FY 2019. This figure does not include special transfers like the Central Provident Fund and Medisave top-ups, GST vouchers and household rebates, amounting to $15.3 billion for FY 2019.

"The projected GST increase is therefore simply only one measure to mitigate the trend of rising expenditure, but clearly is unable to meet it in full," he said.

One way to meet these needs was through borrowing, as it had for the MRT lines in the 1980s, for long-term infrastructure projects like Changi Airport Terminal 5. "Singapore is in a better position now to dictate favourable borrowing terms than in the past as our Government's credit rating is now among the world's best," he said.

But although this strategy of government spending is fairer and more equitable, it is also not without risk, he said. "We have seen enough examples around the world, of countries mired in debt arising from careless borrowings and reckless funding of projects."

He also urged the Government to ensure oversight of major infrastructure projects funded by borrowings, such as by creating an independent panel or body.

Speaking earlier in the day, Mr Gan Thiam Poh (Ang Mo Kio GRC) suggested raising taxes on gambling activities, such as winnings, to support recurrent spending. "(This) could provide a sustainable and long-term revenue to support the rising Singaporeans' social expenditure needs, leaving a rise in GST as a last resort," he said.

Mr Sitoh also addressed calls for more Net Investment Returns (NIR), proceeds from investing Singapore's reserves, to be tapped. Under the current framework, half the expected long-term real returns from GIC, Monetary Authority of Singapore and Temasek can be spent, while the remaining half is re-invested into the reserves.

Mr Sitoh noted the NIR contributes about 20 per cent of the Budget, which without this, would be substantially in deficit every year.

"There are those who advocate for more returns to be used for the present, but I think the current arrangement is fair," said Mr Sitoh. "As they say in Hokkien, 'jit lang jit pua' – half for this generation and half saved for future generations."

ngjunsen@sph.com.sg

Wealth, inheritance taxes could be avenue to level playing field

Consider wealth and inheritance taxes on ultra high net worth individuals as a possible source of revenue in future, MP Cheryl Chan (Fengshan) said yesterday.

These would be an additional source of funds to sustain the many social welfare programmes that may have "a long tail in the years ahead", and help the country maintain fiscal prudence, she said on the second day of debate on the Budget statement.

In a speech delving into inequality and ways to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources, Ms Chan said Singapore has done well, with a system built on meritocracy, a fair and progressive tax system, and a redistribution of wealth focusing on social outcomes.

But in the last 10 years, evidence shows the rise in wealth inequality has been greater than in income inequality, she noted. "Those with wealth are not only on a better footing to accumulate more, they have even better access to resources that help preserve their wealth."

To reduce the wealth inequality gap, Singapore has taxes on personal income, property and consumption, so the top earners and those with more assets contribute to the national coffers, she noted.

But while Singapore has a low personal income tax rate compared with other countries, it is impractical to consider further taxes on income, owing to the shrinking and ageing workforce.

"After all, the ability of an average income worker to build wealth is dependent on sheer labour. Also, the consumption tax in one way or other does impact the lower-income group to meet their basic living expenses," Ms Chan said.

She proposed looking into wealth and inheritance taxes for ultra high net worth individuals or the top 1 to 2 per cent of society.

"In the spirit of giving and sharing, will the ultra high net worth individuals be willing to share more of their wealth to uplift the vulnerable and less privileged communities?" Ms Chan asked rhetorically.

There have been similar calls for such a tax in other countries.

Ms Chan also called for a "decent living wage" for lower-income workers, especially those with young families, so they need not live hand to mouth. Central to the issue is how much consumers and employers are willing to pay to meet this living wage, she said.

"This comes back to the need for sharing. The top and middle tiers of the economy... have more opportunities and pathway to elevate. They can certainly do more for the lower-income group, starting with a willingness to pay more for their services," she added.

Ms Chan said talk about inequality in Singapore will be "chatter", unless people acknowledge that "we must all play a part and take actions in our daily lives to make Singapore an inclusive country".

"Without building our social capital now, defining the values and roles of this country with active civic participation, each Budget will only fall on the ears of citizens like a lecture in class and endless debate of whose rightful duty it is to care for the ageing population and the future generations."

Adrian Lim

Budget 2019 debate

FromTheBackbench

MR YEE CHIA HSING (Chua Chu Kang GRC)

Make car ownership part of means test

Assistance schemes like service and conservancy charge rebates, U-Save rebates and GST vouchers take into account citizens' housing type or the annual value of the home as a proxy for means testing.

Mr Yee suggested adding car ownership as a criterion as well, so that the maximum amount any car-owning household will get would be similar to that applicable for a five-room flat.

It is only fair that the less well-off get more and the more well-off get less, he said. Unfortunately, this allows some relatively well-off individuals who live in a smaller flat to get more than is fair. "We often hear stories from residents that a certain family has a Mercedes, but is living in a three-room flat to take advantage of such rebates and assistance," he said.

MR LIM BIOW CHUAN (Mountbatten)

Let elderly rent a flat alone

During his meet the people sessions, Mr Lim regularly gets requests from seniors who cannot get along with their family members or children and would like to move out to live on their own. However, current policies do not let them rent a subsidised flat alone.

As much as members would wish to encourage families to look after their seniors, the reality is that relationship issues are not easily solved, Mr Lim said. Can the Government consider better supporting seniors by letting them rent a one-room flat on a case-by-case basis? This would allow some of them to live in dignity in their retirement years instead of living in a hostile home environment, he added.

NOMINATED MP IRENE QUAY

Empower allied health professionals

Ms Quay said allied health professionals could play greater roles to manage healthcare costs.

For instance, speech therapists should be allowed to manage patients referred from polyclinics so that they get help more speedily.

Currently, young patients with speech delays – but without other medical conditions – must first be assessed by a hospital doctor before they are referred to the speech therapy department. "I am concerned that this leads to additional consultation costs, as well as delay in seeking proper speech intervention," she said. "Is it not possible to streamline the process?"

She added that similar process improvements could be made for other ailments, such as adults who require outpatient rehabilitation.

NOMINATED MP MOHAMED IRSHAD

Expand Workfare payouts

Mr Mohamed Irshad welcomed the Budget raising the qualifying income cap for the Workfare Income Supplement from $2,000 to $2,300 a month.

But given that the median wage recently rose to $4,400, he suggests raising the cap further to $2,640, or 60 per cent of the median wage. He said he increasingly sees young people entering the gig economy to make ends meet, taking on two or three jobs and scraping by every month.

To better help them, he also suggests that the qualifying age should be lowered to 30 to include younger Singaporeans who are trying to settle down but struggling to get by, and increasing the cash to Central Provident Fund ratio from the current 40:60 to 50:50 or 60:40.

Mr David Hoe's poor PSLE results put him in the Normal (Technical) stream, but he later became one of the top N-level scorers. When he was not allowed to take his O levels, he wrote to the then Education Minister, who intervened. Mr Hoe then took his O levels and is today an economics teacher at a junior college. ST PHOTO: TIFFANY GOH

Scrap streaming in secondary schools: Louis Ng

Subject-based banding can help social mixing, curb stigmatisation of Normal stream students

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

MP Louis Ng (Nee Soon GRC) is an animal rights advocate who opposes the culling of animals, but there is one sacred cow he wants slayed – streaming in secondary schools.

Mr Ng yesterday called for the system to be eliminated in favour of subject-based banding, to ensure social mixing and prevent the stigmatisation faced by students in Normal streams.

Noting that the Education Ministry replaced primary school streaming with subject-based banding in 2008, he wants the same system applied in secondary schools.

Although subject-based banding was rolled out in secondary schools last year and allows Normal stream students to take subjects at a higher academic level, streaming is still used to separate them according to their PSLE score.

Streaming was introduced in 1980 to systematically customise learning for students of different profiles, but there have been calls in recent years to scrap it.

Education Minister Ong Ye Kung said this month that while sorting students by ability has led to better educational outcomes, it may have come at the expense of students in the Normal streams losing confidence.

Yesterday, Mr Ng acknowledged that streaming caters to students' different learning needs and pace, but said the problem is that it is based on academic results. He said Normal stream students tend to have a lower socio-economic status than those in the Express stream.

From 2014 to 2018, 69 per cent of secondary students who received financial help from the Education Ministry were in the Normal stream, he said, adding: "We all know we hang out with our classmates much more than with schoolmates. What streaming has possibly done is to reduce social mixing and harden social stratification.

"I am sure streaming was not meant to divide our nation by social economic status, but we now see streaming does contribute to it."

Using figures, he showed the lack of mobility between streams and said: "If you are a student from the Normal (Technical) stream, you have less than one per cent chance of moving to the Express stream."

Mr Ng said the stratification continues further up the education ladder.

In the past three years, Normal (Technical) graduates formed only 5 per cent of graduates from public polytechnics and only 1 per cent of those who graduated from autonomous universities, he said.

Psychological barriers could be one reason Normal stream students struggle to move into the Express stream.

But there are Normal (Technical) stream students who have done well, he said, citing Mr David Hoe, an economics teacher at a junior college. However, they are in the minority, he added.

Mr Hoe, 31, scored 110 for his PSLE and went into the Normal (Technical) stream. He fell into bad company and took up drinking and smoking. But his circle of friends changed later and they coached him in his studies, Mr Ng said.

Mr Hoe was one of the top scorers for the N levels, but was not allowed to do the O levels. Undeterred, he wrote to then Education Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam – now a Deputy Prime Minister – who intervened, and Mr Hoe got to take the O levels.

Calling for streaming to be scrapped, Mr Ng said: "Our students are not stupid and should not feel they are or face that kind of stigma.

"We need to make sure their future is not decided by one major exam. We need to make sure that, like where we live, we don't have social stratification in where we study."

He added: "I know streaming is a sacred cow and this practice has existed for many decades. Members will know that I don't like to cull animals, but it really is time to slay this sacred cow."

MOTIVATING STUDENTS

What Mr Ng said about playing to students' strengths resonated most strongly with me. I think this will help the child to figure out what his aspirations might be, and find the motivation to pursue and work towards it, even if there are obstacles.

MR DAVID HOE, 31, a former Normal (Technical) stream student who is now an economics teacher at Eunoia JC.

adrianl@sph.com.sg

Need to acknowledge both good and bad of colonial past: Yaacob

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

As Singapore commemorates its bicentennial and reflects on its history, the country must also accept that the colonial experience has had a different impact on its various communities, said former minister Yaacob Ibrahim in Parliament yesterday.

"We need to acknowledge that different communities have different historical experiences and memories," said Dr Yaacob (Jalan Besar GRC). "We need to recognise both the good and the bad."

Although 1819 marked a turning point in Singapore's history, it has also given rise to myths and misperceptions that damage communities here, he added.

One of these is the myth that Singapore was a fishing village "waiting to be discovered by enlightened British imperialists", rather than the vibrant economic hub that historical evidence suggests.

Another is the toxic myth of the lazy native, which has been studied and debunked but yet still lingers in the minds of some people, said Dr Yaacob, the former minister for communications and information as well as former minister-in-charge of Muslim affairs.

"When I was growing up in modern Singapore, my own teachers dismissed my community as being lazy and unable to study hard. This is the burden of history that my community carries. It is unjust and unfair," he added.

"If we are to commemorate the bicentennial, we must also recognise the less savoury aspects of it – practices and ideas designed to meet the needs and maximise the profits of the empire at the expense of the indigenous population."

Referring to Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat's Budget statement, which touched on building an inclusive society, Dr Yaacob said: "If we are to build an inclusive society... we need to ensure that inclusivity applies not just to how we view the here and now, but also how we view our history as a people."

Dr Yaacob said it is right to acknowledge every event for what it is worth, and that the colonialists' arrival changed the region forever. But overly-ascribing Singapore's present-day success to the arrival of the British ignores "larger forces" at work before they set foot on Singapore's shores, he said. Rather than focus on the past 200 years, Singapore should look at 1819 as "one milestone among many".

He urged Singaporeans in this bicentennial year to see how the country's history is intertwined with that of the region. "The diversity that we see in Singapore reflects the diversity of the region and beyond."

In doing so, more Singaporeans – especially the young – will understand how Singapore is a part of the larger region, and how its good location and the talents of its diverse peoples can create a peaceful hub for trade and commerce, he said.

Dr Yaacob suggested changes to school curriculum, including relooking at how history is taught to ensure students are well-versed in pre-colonial history and have a deeper understanding of the region. National education can be expanded for local students to understand the colonial experiences of other Asean countries, he added, noting: "Being part of this region, I strongly believe that we should have a good understanding and appreciation of the region's history."

linettel@sph.com.sg

Increase subsidies to raise fertility rate: MP

Mr Ong Teng Koon (Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC) wants the Government to further subsidise the cost of raising children here, given that Singapore's ageing population and low fertility rate are "existential issues" for its survival.

His suggestions include charging $10 a month for pre-school education, increasing subsidies for childcare and infant-care services, providing subsidised school bus services and giving working mothers more support.

"We have to ask ourselves – what is the value of each additional child to Singapore? Would we consider this to be a worthwhile investment for our national resources?" he said yesterday.

In a similar vein, Dr Lim Wee Kiak (Sembawang GRC) called for the Government to establish free, compulsory pre-school or early childhood education programmes. Currently, a four-hour kindergarten programme at a Ministry of Education facility costs $160 a month, while primary and secondary education is heavily subsidised, with monthly school fees at less than $10.

Mr Ong also said that many young couples face "intense pressures" as costs of living rise and job security becomes less certain.

He noted that many companies are moving towards contract and freelance work, which increases income uncertainty.

Retrenchments are also more common.

"In such a situation, to delay or avoid having children would be altogether a very rational response," Mr Ong said.

In 2017, Singapore's total fertility rate plunged to a seven-year low of 1.16, below the replacement rate of 2.1.

Pointing to countries which have managed to raise their total fertility rates such as Sweden and Norway, Mr Ong said their experiences suggest that addressing the cost of living issues and providing good work-life balance for mothers are important.

On the cost of living in general, Mr Ong said he has met residents who are struggling to cope as the costs of healthcare, education and food go up. Others feel they are "running harder than ever just to stand still".

He stressed the importance of continuing to keep income taxes low.

Concluding, Mr Ong said that if Singapore's low fertility rate poses an existential threat to the country, tackling it should be Singapore's highest priority.

"Singapore has thrown everything but the kitchen sink at this problem. Perhaps it is time to throw the kitchen sink."

Linette Lai

Budget 2019 debate

FromTheGallery

Long-term fiscal plan, funding for ageing S'pore among key issues

MPs cheer bicentennial and Merdeka giveaways, and raise ideas on specific policies

Chua Mui Hoong
Opinion Editor

With 52 MPs, including office-holders, having spoken in two days, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will wrap up the debate on Budget 2019 today. As is customary, the first three days of the two weeks set aside for the Budget are devoted to broad fiscal principles, before MPs go on to scrutinise each ministry's plans.

The two days of debate focused a lot on issues to do with transforming the economy, helping companies climb the innovation ladder and helping workers reskill.

Many MPs also hailed the Bicentennial Bonus, a $1.1 billion package of giveaways for citizens, and the Merdeka Generation Package of additional healthcare subsidies for those in their 60s.

Quite a few MPs also wanted clarity on the long-term fiscal plan for Singapore as it is already relying on interest earned from reserves to sustain its annual Budget. This warrants a detailed response from Mr Heng today.

Some also raised interesting ideas on specific policies which I also hope Mr Heng or the relevant ministry involved, will take on board or respond to.

One specific suggestion that delighted the heartlander in me was the call by Dr Yaacob Ibrahim (Jalan Besar GRC) to turn void decks into vibrant decks of activity.

He said: "Many Singaporeans may remember replicating the exploits of Maradona or Ronaldo at the void decks... Many of you may also recall seeing Malay boys stripping their motorbikes to clean and make minor repairs at the void decks."

Such void deck spaces can be converted into "maker spaces for our heartlanders", he suggested.

"A comfortable place where anyone can go to tinker and fix things, to create, to meet and discuss new ideas and solutions for the community."

He cited a group called Repair Kopitiam that encourages home owners to take their broken appliances to the void decks to learn how to repair them.

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

Many MPs spoke on fiscal sustainability. Across Singapore, more calls are being made to raise subsidies. One is the Workers' Party (WP) proposal to introduce a universal, permanent healthcare plan to augment existing subsidies for Singaporeans once they hit 60.

The Government has raised social spending significantly in recent years. Last year, it signalled it will raise GST from 7 to 9 per cent some time from 2021 to 2025 to fund rising expenditures.

But is a GST hike necessary, or can it be postponed, asked some People's Action Party MPs, who proposed alternative sources of tax revenue. Tax gambling, such as winning proceeds, suggested Mr Gan Thiam Poh (Ang Mo Kio GRC), so that a GST hike can be "a last resort". Ms Cheryl Chan (Fengshan) suggested a net wealth tax and inheritance tax for ultra-high-net-worth individuals such as those in the top 1 to 2 per cent of society.

But some fiscal conservatives in the Chamber took a different stance. Mr Henry Kwek (Nee Soon GRC) said: "It is important to remember our reserves anchor our economy through turbulent times... When a major storm hits Singapore a decade or so down the road, we may find our financial anchor of insufficient weight to stabilise our much larger economy then."

Mr Sitoh Yih Pin (Potong Pasir) noted the trend of rising spending – on healthcare, for example, spending has tripled in 10 years from $3.8 billion in 2009 to $11.7 billion this year. Even a 2 percentage point hike in GST will yield only about $3.3 billion – a drop in the ocean of annual spending of $80 billion.

"The projected GST increase is therefore simply only one measure to mitigate the trend of rising expenditure but clearly is unable to meet it in full," he pointed out.

With spending each year outstripping revenue, he pressed Mr Heng to explain the Government's long-term plan to keep its finances in order. One plan the Government has is to defer spending on long-term infrastructure projects. Rather than set aside money from current Budgets – as it has tended to do – it wants to take up loans, which can be backed by government reserves to keep borrowing costs low.

The proposal won support from several MPs but some wanted more details. WP chief Pritam Singh (Aljunied GRC), for example, asked if such long-term borrowing is meant only for the coming Changi Airport expansion plan, or if it will be used for other long-term projects such as the new Jurong Port and public housing rejuvenation.

When the move to borrow for long-term infrastructure spending was disclosed in last year's Budget, I wrote in a commentary that it would have implications on inter-generational equity.

MPs are right to press the Government to say just how extensive its use of such borrowings will be, and to urge it to put in place systems to ensure due diligence before such loans are tapped. They are also right to probe the Government on its long-term fiscal plan, when it is already spending more than it collects in tax revenue each year and tops it up with investment returns from reserves.

In FY2018, spending was $78.99 billion. Operating revenue came up to just $73.7 billion. Without Net Investment Returns Contribution (NIRC), the Budget will go into billions in deficit each year ($5.32 billion in FY2018). The NIRC was $16.4 billion in FY2018.

To be sure, it will not be easy to square the circle of how to raise revenue to fund increased spending for an ageing population in a city that also has ageing (and deteriorating) infrastructure.

But that is the hard work of governance.

muihoong@sph.com.sg

Mr Ang Wei Neng (Jurong GRC) recounted his experience as chairman of the River Hongbao organising committee and how the festival's fireworks display almost did not take place because a PUB executive had refused to issue a permit for the fireworks as late as a fortnight before the event. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

When River Hongbao fireworks got tangled up in red tape

Rachel Au-Yong
Political Correspondent

An MP has criticised several government agencies for imposing "onerous regulations" on many businesses, and failing to take in their feedback without interventions from higher authorities.

Mr Ang Wei Neng (Jurong GRC) was one of two MPs to make better government communication the focus of their speeches yesterday, the second day of the Budget debate.

While acknowledging that some rules are necessary, Mr Ang said that in other areas, "the amount and nature of regulation might be adding more red tape and making lives miserable for businesses".

The chief executive of ComfortDelGro Taxi gave examples of four agencies and how their rules have hampered businesses, such as the Land Transport Authority's tedious certification process for new cars.

Even for situations in which there is no apparent financial gain, the red tape can be alarming.

Mr Ang recounted his experience as chairman of the River Hongbao organising committee and how the annual festival's popular fireworks display almost did not take place.

"For some reason this year, a PUB executive refused to issue a permit for the fireworks as late as a fortnight before the opening ceremony, for which the Prime Minister was the guest of honour," he said, adding that the approval had been sought months earlier.

He appealed to a "higher authority" and within a day, the approval was given, he said.

"My concern for members of the public is: What if I had no recourse? Would the fireworks have had to be cancelled? What if I was not able to appeal to the higher authority? It appears that we need the intervention of higher authority... for 'exceptions' to be made and before things can move ahead," he added.

Mr Ang said unhelpful regulations should be struck off, but many companies do not speak up against their regulators for fear of repercussions.

He called for a neutral channel to encourage feedback.

"For Singapore to strive in this uncertain world with constant technological and geopolitical disruptions, the Government has to keep listening," Mr Ang said.

TRUST IN GOVT IMPORTANT: MP

Ms Cheng Li Hui (Tampines GRC) said communication is key in a climate when trust in governments worldwide is declining: "We have to continuously strive to ensure that trust in our Government is not and will not be eroded... Once lost, it is difficult to bring back."

She said it was unfortunate that several recent incidents have shaken this confidence in the Government. She cited a recent case of a senior citizen whose MediShield Life payout was only $4.50 for a post-subsidy bill of nearly $4,500. She was glad that the Health Ministry came out quickly to explain the matter, and promised to review the MediShield Life insurance claim limits. "This is how the matter should be handled," she added.

Ms Cheng also cited the misunderstanding among some that the Government had shifted the payout age for the Central Provident Fund Retirement Sum to 70.

The payout eligibility age is still 65 for those born from 1954 onwards – as has been the case since 2007.

It shows "we should work harder at our communication and make it more easily understood", she said.

She urged the CPF Board to come up with ways for the elderly to have face-to-face appointments with an officer more easily.

"We cannot afford to have our people confused, or their trust and confidence in the Government would be affected," she said.

rachelay@sph.com.sg

Strengthen institutions to hold Govt to account: NMP

Steps should be taken to strengthen Parliament, civic society and academic institutions, so that Singaporeans can hold their Government to account.

Nominated MP Walter Theseira made the call yesterday when he suggested ways to improve the three major institutions.

The ruling People's Action Party has had an uninterrupted mandate since independence in 1965, he noted. "But all things must pass. If and when that happens, to set and keep Singapore on the right path, let us invest today to have institutions in place that allow Singaporeans to speak from a position of strength on the issues of the day and challenge any future Government they feel is not acting in the best interests of Singaporeans," he said in Parliament.

To strengthen the parliamentary system, Dr Theseira asked for more resources for backbenchers to hire experts. With this, MPs can provide independently-researched policy suggestions in a debate, instead of relying on their own knowledge, networks or the Government to come up with solutions, he said.

He also asked for more support for MPs to hire legislative and secretarial assistants, especially for those serving on additional parliamentary committees.

Elected MPs reportedly receive stipends of $1,300 to hire a legislative assistant and $500 for secretarial support. MPs often team up to hire an assistant.

Similarly, opposition MPs would benefit from getting extra help in carrying out their work, he added.

Nominated MPs would also gain by having their own parliamentary assistants, to "ensure personal wealth and career considerations do not stand in the way of being able to serve fully".

On civil society, he said more meaningful collaborations between such groups and the Government can happen, if they have more access to information.

He proposed a "transparency fund" so that MPs' frequent requests for data in Parliament can be earmarked for regular updates and released publicly.

He noted that about half of last year's 698 parliamentary questions were requests for data, and three-quarters were answered. "These answers show that much information held by the Government is of public interest, is readily available, and by release, poses no significant sensitivities."

Dr Theseira, an economics professor, also suggested ways to encourage more Singaporeans to join academia, especially in the social sciences. While Singaporeans appear to be well represented in local academia – about 50-50 – the local representation is much stronger among teaching staff than faculty, he noted.

"We want and must have Singaporeans in academia and in research... because (they) must be in charge of asking the critical questions about who we are, what the problems in society are, and how to solve them."

He added: "We are frankly too small for experts from elsewhere to want to study us thoroughly. In any case, we should never depend on them."

He also urged the Government to "be cognisant that it has much more power than a mere academic has and there should be room for even disagreeable academics to contribute to Singapore".

Rachel Au-Yong

Make mental health a 'national priority', like diabetes

If Singapore can declare war on diabetes, which affects one in nine people, what more can be done to combat mental health conditions, which afflict one in seven?

Nominated MP Anthea Ong posed this question yesterday when she made a plea to the Government to make mental health a national priority.

She warned of the "clear and present danger the invisible yet mounting challenge of mental health" could pose if more people suffer from it.

Beyond looking out for material well-being, the Government and society must learn to value mental health as a basic need, she said.

Some headway has been made, she added, noting that primary care providers like polyclinics are being trained to support mental health services in non-stigmatising environments.

But she urged that an inter-ministerial agency be established to develop a culture of improving citizens' subjective well-being.

It could, among other things, look at implementing compulsory mental health education in schools, and employment laws to provide for psycho-social health and safety.

The community must do its part too, she said, noting that a commercial insurer launched the first mental health insurance product this year. "The way we look at mental health reminds me of climate change. It's invisible, and so it gets parked... in the 'important but not urgent' quadrant of our awareness."

She added: "Yet like climate change, it's our future – our young ones – that we are jeopardising most if we continue with a transactional approach in addressing the challenge. Poor mental health will cost Singapore our future when our children cannot reach their full potential, especially when their lives end prematurely."

Ms Ong, who said she had a "close shave with depression over 12 years ago", was among three MPs who spoke about mental health.

Dr Intan Azura Mokhtar (Ang Mo Kio GRC) suggested giving incentives to employers who hire those with mental health conditions and special needs.

Ms Joan Pereira (Tanjong Pagar GRC) singled out the mental health of the elderly as a concern. Among other things, she wants the Government to assign a voluntary welfare organisation to actively keep an eye out for seniors who may have mental health conditions and help them get help, if needed.

Rachel Au-Yong

NUS, NTU shine in global league table by subject

14 of their offerings in top 10 amid decline among China, Japan, S. Korea, HK schools

Sandra Davie
Senior Education Correspondent

Singapore's two leading universities – the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) – have done well in a league table comparing universities around the world by subjects.

The latest edition of the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject released yesterday showed that in total, 14 Singapore subject offerings ranked in the global top 10.

This was more than the combined totals of China (four), Hong Kong (three) and Japan (three).

Of Singapore's 14 top-10 performances, nine were achieved by NUS, and five by NTU.

Singapore Management University broke into the top 50 for the study of business and management.

In doing so, it reached its highest ever rank in this subject table – No. 41.

QS, a London-based higher education analyst firm, stressed that Singapore's universities continue to improve, with 41 of its 76 ranked university departments improving their positions year on year.

It said these results come amid a widespread Asian malaise at the very top, with China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Japan all regressing.

The data is used to evaluate more than 1,200 universities across 78 places, providing students, policymakers, academic administrators, faculty and employers with unique insight into institutional performance. The methodology comprises four key indicators:

- Academic reputation: In how much esteem a particular university is held by the global academic community.
- Employer reputation: How highly employers worldwide regard a particular institution's graduates.
- Citations per paper: How impactful, on average, a faculty's research is.
- H-Index: How productive, and impactful, the average scholar at a given faculty is.

The highest rank of any Singapore university was achieved by NUS.

It rose from No. 6 to No. 2 in civil and structural engineering, having overtaken the University of Cambridge and the University of California, Berkeley.

NTU remained the world's third-best university for the study of materials science.

Harvard University remained the world's leading university, ranking as the world's best institution for the study of 12 subjects.

Its closest competitor was still the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which was the world leader in 11 subjects. However, the United States' higher education system continued to decline relative to competitors, with six fewer No. 1 ranks than last year.

Mr Ben Sowter, director of research at QS, said: "Singapore has long been Asia's most successful higher education system in our rankings, but there is some evidence that its ascendancy may be beginning to increase further. With China, Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan all seeing their number of top-10 and top-20 places decrease, Singapore is the only major Asian higher education system to record consistent improvements.

"This is driven by the increasing desirability of Singaporean graduates, with the average score achieved by its universities for our employer reputation indicator rising this year."

Mr Sowter added that though QS stresses the importance of a nation cultivating a successful system – because the best higher education sectors are those that serve an entire population – Singapore's trajectory could see it take a global No. 1 rank in its subject tables in future years.

This could happen as the Republic's universities have come close to entering the global top-10 in the overall QS World University Rankings. "These would be significant milestones for a group of universities that remain as ambitious as they are competitive," Mr Sowter said.

sandra@sph.com.sg

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2019: Singapore's top-10 departments

Subject	Rank 2019	Rank 2018	Institution
Architecture/ Built Environment	**8**	10	National University of Singapore
Chemistry	**7**	7	National University of Singapore
Chemistry	**9**	11	Nanyang Technological University
Communication and Media Studies	**8**	12	Nanyang Technological University
Computer Science and Information Systems	**10**	10*	National University of Singapore
Engineering - Chemical	**7***	9	National University of Singapore
Engineering - Civil and Structural	**10**	21*	Nanyang Technological University
Engineering - Civil and Structural	**2**	6	National University of Singapore
Engineering - Electrical and Electronic	**6**	12	Nanyang Technological University
Engineering - Electrical and Electronic	**9***	10	National University of Singapore
Environmental Sciences	**10**	10	National University of Singapore
Geography	**8**	10	National University of Singapore
Materials Science	**3**	3	Nanyang Technological University
Statistics and Operational Research	**9**	11	National University of Singapore

*Joint ranking
NOTE: Results are available at www.TopUniversities.com
Source: QS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Dr William Wan posing with businesswoman Carrie Chan, 54, and Mr Charles Wu, 67, a freelance actor, during the book-signing session at the 11th edition of The Straits Times Book Club yesterday. During the event, Dr Wan spoke with The Straits Times travel writer Lee Siew Hua about his new book, Through The Valley, and on the grace of ageing and dying well. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Kindness champion explores how people can die well

Olivia Ho

When he turned 61 a decade ago, Dr William Wan made a bucket list.

The first item on it was skydiving.

That same year, as he and his wife drove past an airfield in Nebraska in the US, Dr Wan decided to take the plunge. The next thing he knew, he was jumping out of a rickety plane 12,000 feet (3,700m) in the air.

"All my doctor friends told me, 'If you die, we won't be there at your funeral,'" he recalled. "But it's that desire to live and feel and be excited about the fact I'm living."

Speaking at the 11th edition of The Straits Times (ST) Book Club yesterday, Dr Wan strove to answer the age-old question of how to die well.

About 300 people gathered at the National Library to hear him discuss his new book, Through The Valley, with ST travel writer Lee Siew Hua.

"We are an ageing society," said Dr Wan, 71, the general secretary of the Singapore Kindness Movement.

"But I don't want people to go away thinking this book is just for people who are older. The day we are born, we start to age. We should start thinking about how we have a limited window of living and how to make the best of it."

He spoke of overcoming the fear of dying, how to help someone through grief, and the importance of leaving a will or a lasting power of attorney, in the event of something happening to a person.

Pastor Victor Wong travelled with his wife from Kuala Lumpur to attend the session after spotting Dr Wan's book at a Popular bookstore. He said he found the talk apt and insightful.

He asked Dr Wan how he envisages his own funeral. Dr Wan said he wants to spend his last days being eulogised by friends and family while he can still hear them. "When the moment comes, I can close my eyes with fantastic memories of those around me telling me how I made a difference in their lives."

The book club runs every last Wednesday of the month. At the next session, on March 27, professors Tommy Koh and S. Jayakumar will discuss their book Pedra Branca: Story Of The Unheard Cases with ST opinion editor Chua Mui Hoong. Readers can register at str.sg/oaSe

oliviaho@sph.com.sg

Maid hit so badly she couldn't see out of one eye

Shaffiq Alkhatib
Court Correspondent

A woman abused her Indonesian domestic helper two months after she started working for the household, causing injuries that included a broken nose.

Jenny Chan Yun Hui also hit Ms Rasi's head with a plastic bowl, causing it to bleed, and struck the maid's face multiple times until her left eye became so swollen she was unable to see out of it.

Chan, 41, pleaded guilty in court yesterday to three assault charges, including one count of causing grievous hurt.

Ms Rasi, 27, whose name has only one word, started work in Chan's apartment in Tanjong Rhu Road in February 2016.

The maid, who had to wake up at around 6am every day, did not have enough rest and often nodded off while performing her chores.

This angered Chan, who started abusing her in April that year.

In one instance, the Singaporean became upset when Ms Rasi did not complete her morning chores, and punched her in the eye.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Kelly Ho said Chan also hit the back of the maid's head with a plastic bowl, causing it to bleed. After that, she rinsed off Ms Rasi's blood using a shower head.

On another occasion, Chan punched Ms Rasi's nose several times after becoming angry with her for waking up late.

She continued hitting the maid even though Ms Rasi complained that she could not breathe through her nose.

The maid was later found to have suffered a nasal bone fracture.

When Ms Rasi said she wanted to stop working for the household, Chan told her that if the Indonesian ran away, she would alert the police, and the younger woman would then be jailed for 20 years.

Later that day, Chan pinched Ms Rasi's ears with her finger nails, drawing blood.

DPP Ho said: "The accused also punched the victim's eyes multiple times, until the victim's left eye was so swollen that she was unable to see using her left eye for about 30 minutes."

On June 19, 2016, Ms Rasi confided in another maid, who advised her to take a taxi to the Indonesian Embassy to seek help.

She did so the next day and was later taken to Tan Tock Seng Hospital, where she was warded until June 22 that year.

The court heard that Chan has mental issues, but details were not revealed in court yesterday.

Her pre-trial conference will be held on March 11 to arrange another court hearing to assess matters, including whether her mental issues had affected her self-control.

For causing grievous hurt to the maid, Chan can be jailed for up to 15 years and fined.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

Woman killed in Tuas accident was HP employee

Ng Huiwen

The 35-year-old woman who died in a bus accident at the Tuas Checkpoint on Tuesday morning was an employee of Hewlett-Packard (HP), the technology company said yesterday.

The Straits Times understands that she is Ms Mok Fei Chen, a Malaysian who worked in Singapore.

She was killed after the bus she was in collided into the railings near the checkpoint at about 4am.

The impact sent her and another woman flying out of the vehicle onto the ground. Ms Mok was pronounced dead at the scene.

Fifteen other people, including Ms Mok's husband and some HP employees, were hurt.

An HP spokesman said in a statement yesterday: "We are deeply saddened to confirm that an HP employee passed away yesterday in a traffic accident."

The spokesman added that most of the other employees who required medical treatment have been discharged from hospital.

"Our focus is on supporting our colleagues and their families at this difficult time," the spokesman said.

"The safety of all employees is our highest priority and we continue to work with our transportation vendor to ensure safety of the vehicles."

Ms Mok and her husband, who is also believed to be an HP employee, have two daughters, according to her Facebook profile.

The couple, who are from Johor Baru, were believed to be on the way to work when the accident happened.

On her Facebook page, Ms Mok often shared photos of her family celebrating special occasions, such as Christmas and birthdays.

They were also pictured on a family trip to Taiwan in August last year.

Chinese-language newspaper Lianhe Wanbao reported yesterday that Ms Mok's husband and three relatives arrived at the mortuary at about 10am in a Malaysia-registered car.

The four of them spoke to an investigation officer for about 10 minutes before they left.

Police have arrested the 59-year-old bus driver for causing death by a rash act.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg

HOT PICKS OF THE WEEK!

SAVE 24%

3 FOR $4.45

MALAYSIA
Red Dragon Fruits
~~U.P. 3 for $5.85~~

SAVE 38%

99¢/100g

MEXICO
Asparagus
~~U.P. $1.59~~

Giant

www.giant.sg

Dare to 无敌价! COMPARE!

28 February - 6 March 2019

The **BEST PRICE** or we'll **DOUBLE** the Difference*!

HOT PICKS OF THE WEEK!

SAVE 11%

2 FOR $10.95

NESCAFE
2-In-1/3-In-1 Instant Coffee
Assorted
(30s - 35s) x (9g - 19g)
~~U.P. 2 for $12.30~~

MIX & MATCH

SAVE 21%

$19.65

DETTOL
Antiseptic Liquid
Twin Pack
2s x 1L
~~U.P. $24.95~~

Banded with FREE 750ml

FRUITS, VEGETABLE, SEAFOOD & MEAT

SAVE 26%

29¢/100g

THAILAND
Seedless Guava
~~U.P. 39¢~~

SAVE 20%

3 FOR $3.95

CHINA
Shingo Pears
~~U.P. 3 for $4.95~~

SAVE 24%

3 FOR $4.45

THAILAND
Honey Mangoes
~~U.P. 3 for $5.85~~

SAVE 25%

2 FOR $5.95

SOUTH AFRICA
Red Seedless Grapes
500g
~~U.P. 2 for $7.90~~

SAVE 46%

2 FOR $7.45

KOREA
Strawberries
250g
~~U.P. 2 for $13.90~~

SAVE 38%

3 FOR $2.25

CHINA
Broccoli
~~U.P. 3 for $3.60~~

SAVE 28%

$1.43/100g

NORWEGIAN
Fresh Whole Salmon
~~U.P. $1.99~~

Also Available:
$2.48/100g Mid-Cut ~~U.P. $3.19~~
$2.68/100g Fillet ~~U.P. $3.79~~

SAVE 24%

$1.89/100g

Fresh Tiger Prawns
~~U.P. $2.49~~

SAVE 27%

$1.25/100g

AUSTRALIA
Chilled Pork Spare Ribs
~~U.P. $1.72~~

SAVE 27%

$9.90 each

Large Thawed Duck
1.7kg - 2kg
~~U.P. $13.50~~

GROCERY NEEDS

SAVE 30%

$6.95

DR. OETKER
Ristorante Pizza
Assorted
320g - 390g
~~U.P. $9.95~~

SAVE 41%

2 FOR $9.95

CP
Jumbo Chicken Popcorn
Original/Tom Yam
700g
~~U.P. 2 for $17~~

MIX & MATCH

SAVE 37%

$9.95

100PLUS
Ready To Drink
Regular/Zero
24s x 325ml
~~U.P. $15.70~~

SAVE 12%

$8.80

SKOL
Canned Beer
6s x 320ml
~~U.P. $9.95~~

SAVE 25%

$14.90

SERENGETI
Wine
Assorted
750ml
South Africa
~~U.P. $19.90~~

SAVE 24%

$1.95

JACK 'N JILL
Potato Chips
Assorted
160g
~~U.P. $2.55~~

SAVE 13%

2 FOR $3.85

MAGGI
2-Minute Instant Noodles
Assorted
5s x (77g - 80g)
~~U.P. 2 for $4.40~~

MIX & MATCH

SAVE 10%

$12.95

KLEENEX
3-Ply Clean Care Bathroom Tissue
Assorted
20s x 200sheets
~~U.P. $14.45~~

HOUSEHOLD NEEDS

SAVE 51%

$2.90 each

Cotton Bath Mat
Assorted Designs
40cm x 60cm
~~U.P. $5.90~~

SAVE 50%

$9.90 each

Deep Frying Pan
Assorted Colours
26cm
• Marble Coating
~~U.P. $19.90~~

SAVE FURTHER

Tap & Save More!
Earn extra savings with every dollar spent!

PASSION

UOB delight

Flash & Save More!
Get up to **8% rebate** and **10% off** house brands when you flash your **UOB card.** T&Cs apply.

SHOP ONLINE www.giantonline.com.sg

UOB Delight Card 8%+10% off house brands

MILES TO SHOP POINTS TO FLY

SERVICE HOTLINE 1800 891 4000 service@giantsingapore.com.sg

3% Senior Citizen's Day

FOLLOW ME FOR MORE LOBANGS!

*We'll double the price difference of the items in this Dare to Compare Ad if identical items from any local competitor's newspaper ad published within 28 February - 6 March 2019 of this 7-day promotion (excludes prices on online platform) are at a better price. Valid only when item is from the same Country of Origin and price is offered in the same unit type or bundle deal (100g for 100g; "Any 2" for "Any 2"; Same gift type) for the same product variant. Only the price difference will be doubled and refunded. Customers who want to make a claim will need to produce the proof of purchase (in the form of tax receipt or invoice) of the said item from the local competitors within 3 days from the date of purchase. Only purchases made within the advertised period will be eligible for claim. While stocks last. Availability differs from store to store. No traders allowed. Pictures are for illustration purposes only. Trimmings and props are not included. Exclusion list applies. Prices shown are correct at time of printing. Please check our website or in-store for the latest updates.

Mrs Saras Adiya successfully underwent a transplant with her husband N. Arumugam's kidney last December. The couple are looking forward to celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary next month. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

Husband's kidney gives wife second chance at life

Couple able to celebrate 40 years of marriage after years of anguish over woman's illness

P. Bala

On Feb 14, Mr N. Arumugam gave his wife, Mrs Saras Adiya, a big hug.

Since they got married 40 years ago, his gift for her each Valentine's Day had usually been jewellery or flowers.

But this year was special. His hug for her was filled with deep emotion and a lot of relief as the 66-year-old had feared he would lose his wife last year because she was seriously ill.

On a day when couples express their love for each other, he was overjoyed that his 60-year-old wife was hale and hearty after he donated his kidney to her.

"Married life is not just about sacrifices. It is about giving in to each other to make it work," he told tabla! newspaper. "There is no room for egos and, along with patience, one must develop the resilience and fighting spirit to see through challenges together."

The couple had been facing several challenges since they fell in love and tied the knot in 1979.

They faced the struggles of young parents. After sending their children – daughter, Umavathy, now 39, and son, Uthayakumaran, now 34 – to school and completing household chores, Mrs Saras would help her husband run his flower shop, which he started near their Housing Board flat in Yishun 30 years ago.

However, what turned their lives upside down was Mrs Saras being diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease in 2013. It is an inherited disorder where cysts develop in the kidneys, causing them to enlarge and lose function over time. She promptly followed up with further medical tests and medication, but her condition did not improve.

Three years ago, her doctor suggested that she undergo kidney dialysis. But she was not in favour of it then as the condition had not affected her lifestyle. She was still able to go to the market daily, meet friends regularly and attend social functions.

But her condition began to deteriorate gradually and the doctor informed her family members that something had to be done soon or she might die. One option was to have an immediate kidney transplant, but this was possible only if a matching donor could be found.

Mrs Umavathy said: "Dad has too much love for mother, but he is someone who doesn't express his love openly. But on hearing this news, he wanted to save her at all costs and was the first in the family to volunteer and offer his kidney."

Though they were told about the possible risks that could arise after the transplant, the couple were determined to pull it off together.

They were also warned that a failure in tests leading up to the transplant would mean the whole process would be called off.

From the middle of last year, Mr Arumugam went for numerous tests to assess if his kidney was suitable for donation. It took a toll on his personal finances as he had to close his shop several times.

Mrs Saras said: "I was rather calm about the whole situation and went about life normally. It was a tense period for my husband as he had to manage his business and go for the medical tests. Despite the fear of losing me, my family members were positive."

After six months of intensive tests, they got the green light to proceed with the transplant.

Mr Arumugam said: "At the back of my mind, I was worried whether my kidney would be a match. But I was never going to give up despite all the medical tests I had to take. When the initial tests showed at least a 60 per cent match, there was a glimmer of hope. The rest was in God's hands."

Last December, Mrs Saras underwent a successful kidney transplant at a local hospital. It cost the family $20,000, half of which was paid by Medisave. She considers it a "second chance at life". She has had to make minor adjustments to her diet and lifestyle, but is well on the road to full recovery.

Mr Arumugam is back to running his flower business. He believes there is no greater joy than being able to provide for the love of his life. The couple will be celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary next month.

stnewsdesk@sph.com.sg

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince on official visit to Singapore

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, will be making an official visit to Singapore today, at the invitation of President Halimah Yacob.

Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said yesterday that Sheikh Mohamed – who is also the Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces – will receive a ceremonial welcome at the Istana and pay a courtesy call on Madam Halimah, who will also host him to an official lunch.

The Crown Prince, who will be accompanied by a delegation of ministers and senior officials during his visit to the Republic, will also meet Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who will also host him to dinner.

"During the visit, His Royal Highness Sheikh Mohamed and Prime Minister Lee will witness the exchange of the Joint Declaration on a Singapore-UAE Comprehensive Partnership, which will elevate bilateral ties and expand cooperation between Singapore and the UAE," said the MFA.

It added that the visit "reaffirms the UAE's excellent and longstanding relations with Singapore".

Sheikh Mohamed last made an official visit to Singapore in 2009.

Singapore and the UAE first established diplomatic relations in 1985.

The UAE is the Republic's largest trading partner in the Middle East and its 16th largest trading partner globally, with bilateral trade touching $18.1 billion.

Notable UAE companies with investments in Singapore include wafer fabrication firm Global Foundries – owned by Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Investment Co – and ground handling firm Dnata, part of the Emirates Group.

Singapore companies with investments in the UAE include DBS Bank and SembCorp Utilities.

Zhaki Abdullah

ST Engineering to test drones at Lower Seletar Reservoir

Zhaki Abdullah

More sophisticated drone operations may soon be carried out in Singapore, with ST Engineering receiving approval to test drones that can be used for perimeter security screening and lightweight deliveries.

The firm announced yesterday that the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) has approved its application to conduct trials over the Lower Seletar Reservoir; they involve flights beyond the visual line of sight (BVLOS) of its operator.

In a call for proposal two years ago, the Ministry of Transport and CAAS said the use of BVLOS could enhance overall productivity and benefit search and rescue efforts, as well as building and structural inspections.

ST Engineering, the first firm here to receive approval, will test its DroNet technology, which uses unmanned devices such as drones to carry out specific tasks.

CAAS director-general Kevin Shum said the ST Engineering team underwent stringent safety evaluations to make the trial possible.

He added that this opens up the possibility of more sophisticated drone operations here.

Mr Lim Serh Ghee, president of ST Engineering's aerospace sector, said: "This will help pave the way for drone applications to be conducted more effectively... thereby unlocking higher potential in drone operations for users."

PUB's chief information officer Michael Toh said the water agency is also working towards a smart water management system with the use of new technologies.

"Remote-sensing technologies on unmanned vehicles such as drones have the potential to provide real-time monitoring of our assets and infrastructure," he added.

Last year, ST Engineering signed an agreement with CAAS to facilitate the development of BVLOS operations in Singapore.

Under the agreement, ST Engineering will help CAAS enhance regulatory requirements for such operations.

ST Engineering's trial on the use of drones for potentially dangerous jobs was also one of the first five projects identified for the one-north business district, designated last February as Singapore's first "drone estate".

azhaki@sph.com.sg

Probation for model who molested partygoer

Shaffiq Alkhatib
Court Correspondent

A male model who molested a woman after a Sentosa Cove private party in 2017 was sentenced to 15 months' probation yesterday.

Briton Coker Gyles Akinkumni Jagdeesh, 21, pleaded guilty last month to a molestation charge.

As part of his probation, he must remain indoors from 10pm to 6am every day and has to perform 100 hours of community service. His uncle had to pay a bond of $5,000 to ensure his good behaviour.

Better known as Gyles Coker, the Singapore permanent resident had starred in a music video with home-grown singer Tabitha Nauser for her single, Rules.

He had also appeared in numerous fashion spreads in magazines.

The court heard that the woman and her friend, both 21, were in a pool at the One°15 Marina Sentosa Cove club at around 7pm on Nov 18, 2017, when they spotted the model at the party.

Her friend was interested to get to know Coker, but when the victim asked her about it, she denied it and laughed. After a shower, the victim's friend left in a taxi.

While waiting at the club's taxi pick-up point at around 9pm, the victim met Coker, who asked if she had a lighter. She replied that she was not a smoker. They chatted and the victim let on that her friend was interested in him.

Coker Gyles Akinkumni Jagdeesh was sentenced to 15 months' probation. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

She then snapped a selfie with Coker to send to her friend.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Gregory Gan told District Judge Jasvender Kaur: "The accused began talking to the victim and told her he was a model. The accused then placed his right arm around the victim's shoulder when he was standing on her left.

"He told her he was going for a house party and asked her if she wanted to come along. The victim declined the invitation and sought to leave."

Coker then asked the woman if she was feeling sexually aroused and made a lewd remark about her body. After she backed away, Coker pulled her towards him and molested her.

The DPP added: "According to the victim, this touch lasted for around three seconds. The victim was shocked and angry and she left the pick-up point."

She told her boyfriend and her friend about the incident later that evening and made a police report two days later.

For outraging the woman's modesty, Coker could have been jailed for up to two years and fined or caned.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

IT'S A DATE

sweetspot Partner Content

TOP PICKS

Say hello to mala

At Booth E39 of Food and Beverage Fair, try out Juewei's fresh braised mala snack bites. Their extensive range of bites includes duck tongue, duck neck, vegetables and even seafood. Visitors to the fair receive 30 per cent off all of Juewei's products.*

Noodles for days

Noodle Master, at C33 and C35 of Food and Beverage Fair, will be offering visitors one set of spicy clam noodles, crispy pork dumplings and calamansi juice at only $8.90. The noodles are freshly made, tossed in shredded clam mild spicy sauce and have no added preservatives.*

** Food & Beverage Fair 2019 takes place from March 21 to 24 at Singapore Expo Hall 5, from 11am to 10pm daily. Admission is free.*

No more tangles

Creative, at Booths 6141, 6810 and 6801 of ITSHOW 2019, is changing the wireless earphones game with its Outlier Air. A pair of wireless sweatproof in-ears, the Outlier Air has 30 hours of total playtime, Bluetooth 5.0 connectivity, and even easy access to virtual assistants like Siri and Google Assistant.

Immersive sounds

Nura's star product is the nuraphone, the only pair of headphones that adapts to your hearing. Its self-hearing engine automatically measures your hearing by monitoring otoacoustic emissions. The learning process takes about a minute and is performed using a free companion app.

Find out more at Booth 6817 of ITSHOW 2019.

Last year's ITSHOW drew large crowds interested in the latest tech. PHOTOS: ST FILE, SAMSUNG

Tech it to the next level

This year's ITSHOW 2019 offers the latest in technology

At next week's ITSHOW 2019, head down to Suntec City Singapore and see the latest that popular tech brands have to offer.

The four-day convention runs from March 7 to 10, with lucky draws, trade-in services and more.

Step it up with Samsung

Game, browse and stream comfortably with the Samsung Space Monitor. With 4K ultra-high-definition resolution, the monitor leverages its sleek design and functionality to allow users to focus on what is on the screen.

When not in use, the monitor can be pushed back to sit flat against a wall. Bring it up to use with a unique arm stand that allows the monitor to be easily tilted or extended from the wall.

The Zero-Level Height Adjustable Stand feature allows for a versatile viewing experience — view from a height of 8.4 inches above the desktop all the way down to surface level, for optimal comfort and convenience. This is especially handy when working with a laptop, as users can view both screens on the same level.

A tech marvel

The Samsung Space Monitor is not just a design feat — it is a feature-rich, high-performance monitor.

Both the 27-inch model's WQHD (2560 x 1440) resolution screen and the 32-inch model's 4K UHD display offer lifelike and pin-sharp images. The screens provide ample space for viewing documents and webpages, with less scrolling and zooming.

The 27-inch model's fast 144 Hz refresh rate is perfect for gamers, as it ensures flawlessly smooth visuals for fast-action gaming.

Both models also feature high brightness and support for over one billion shades of colour, presenting photos, videos and games in vibrant detail and stunning contrast.

ITSHOW 2019

When: March 7 to 10

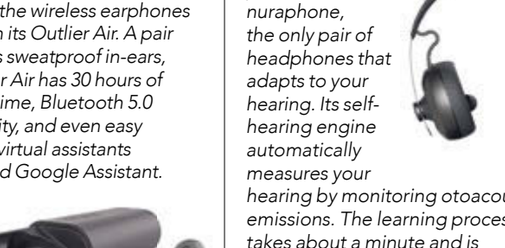
Where: Suntec City Singapore, Level 3 (11am to 9pm), Levels 4 and 6 (12pm to 9pm)

Admission: Free

Info: https://www.comexitshow.com.sg/

The Samsung Space Monitor boasts sleek design and functionality.

ITSHOW 2019



Gourmet buns

Dim sum manufacturer Kong Guan is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a brand new gourmet pork bao.

Launching at Booth A23 of Food & Beverage Fair 2019*, the bao is generously filled with gourmet marinated pork and hard-boiled quail eggs, and wrapped in a jumbo-sized springy bun.

Get one for $3, and four for $11. Kong Guan's gourmet series also includes Chocolate Fondue, Salted Egg Custard and Truffle Mushroom Bun.

* Food & Beverage Fair 2019 takes place from March 21 to 24 at Singapore Expo Hall 5, from 11am to 10pm daily. Admission is free.

Anything but ordinary

Microsoft's Experience Zone at ITSHOW 2019 is not to be missed.

Located at Level 3 of Suntec City Singapore, the 180 sq m space is modelled after an actual house, with the latest Surface devices in different areas to bring the modern personal computing experience to life. This includes the Surface Pro 6, a versatile and portable tablet PC, and the Surface Studio 2, a powerful workhorse device that boasts peak vibrance and graphics performance.

Visitors can also visit the kitchen to learn about the magic behind Windows 10 Modern PCs.

Get more with less

Leading dash cam provider Thinkware will be bringing its Narrow Band-Internet of Things (IoT) X700 dash cam to Singapore, at Booth 6625 of ITSHOW 2019.

The dash cam will be able to send notifications if an impact is detected during parking. Users can also easily check the voltage of their car battery, and turn off their dash cam with convenience. Parked cars can also be easily located if lost.

The X700 dash cam is compatible with the NB-IoT dongle. Preorders for the dongle can be made during ITSHOW 2019.

THE STRAITS TIMES
A Singapore Press Holdings publication
News Centre
1000 Toa Payoh North, Singapore
318994

CONTACT US
General line: 6319-6319
Home: 6319-5397
stnewsdesk@sph.com.sg
Business: 6319-5360
stbusiness@sph.com.sg

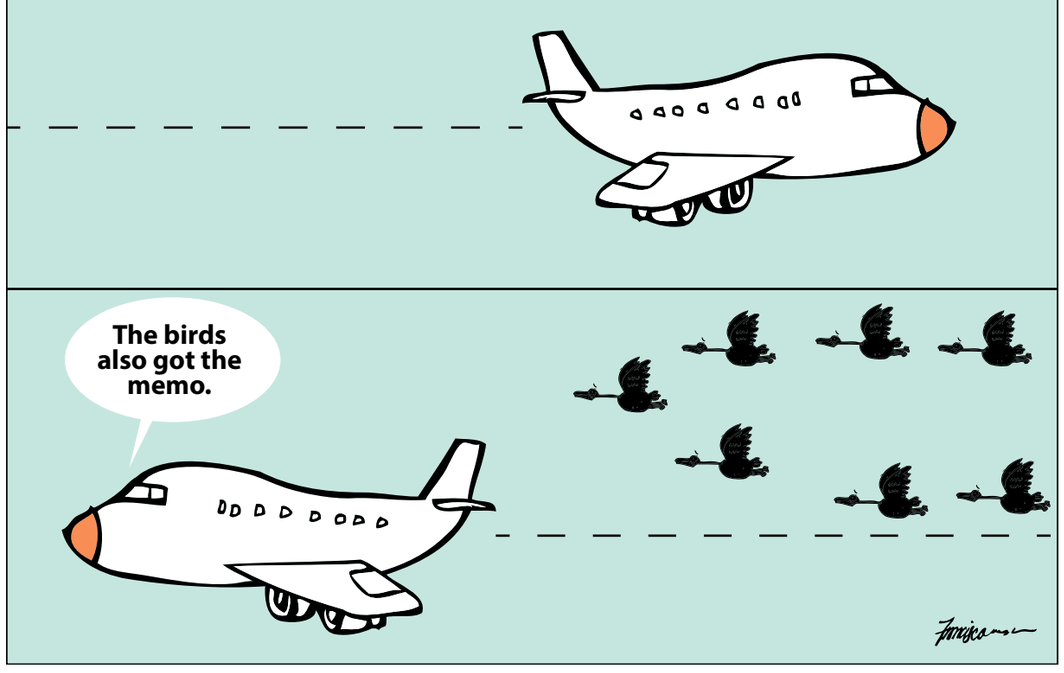
Life: 6319-5416
stlife@sph.com.sg
Art: 6319-5591
start@sph.com.sg
Newsline: 1800-828-2828
World: 6319-5745
stworld@sph.com.sg

Sport: 6319-5376
stsports@sph.com.sg
Pictures: 6319-5328
stimage@sph.com.sg
ST Digital: 6319-3232
stdigital@sph.com.sg

FORUM

Fong Wee Shian's TAKE

FLIGHTS REROUTED TO AVOID PAKISTAN AIRSPACE



Bring kampung spirit to lift rides

As most people in Singapore live in high-rise public or private apartments, and almost all of these buildings have lifts, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of Singapore residents take a lift ride at least once a day.

However, there seems to be a lack of basic courtesy when it comes to taking the lift with someone else.

I find that there are three types of people who contribute to this problem – namely entitled, ignorant and zombie lift companions.

Entitled lift companions expect you to be the lift attendant for them. They will avoid standing next to the lift buttons, but expect you to hold the lift door open and press the button to their level on their behalf.

Do not be surprised if you get a stare as a reward for not keeping the lift door open for them. Heaven forbid if the lift door closes in on them just as they walk through, because you will be blamed for putting their lives at risk by failing to keep the door open.

Ignorant lift companions are usually armed with a mobile phone. Their eyes, ears and hands will permanently be glued to their devices while they are taking the lift with you. These people are oblivious to your presence and will avoid touching the lift buttons at all cost, except to get to their level.

Zombie lift companions bear an uncanny resemblance to the grim reaper. They are usually silent, expressionless and will remain that way unless you offend them.

They enter the lift without a word, turn around, cross their arms and stare at the vastness of space in the lift, and exit the lift in the same manner. Do not expect any thanks or acknowledgement even if you hold the lift door open for them.

I hope that people will begin to recognise and refrain from such anti-social behaviour in lifts.

We should bring a little bit of the kampung spirit into our neighbourhood lifts. Good lift etiquette can help to brighten our mornings when we leave our homes, and make us feel welcome when we return home after a hard day's work.

Daniel Oon Ban Hock

Disorganised layout led to low footfall

One of the Chinatown Complex hawkers quoted in a recent report said that footfall to her stall was low because the food centre is not visible from the street (When it's renovation time, some hawkers move or quit, Feb 25).

I do not think that is the actual reason for the low footfall.

Rather, I feel that the disorganised layout of the food centre might be the reason for the low footfall, and the authorities should look into this problem as the complex undergoes a three-month renovation.

I have always found it difficult to navigate and find specific stalls within the food centre.

Unlike other conventional food centres, where stalls are organised in rows, the stalls in Chinatown Complex seem to be arranged in random fashion, located in every nook and cranny of the centre.

Because of the messy layout, some patrons may not be able to locate specific stalls that are away from central escalators.

This results in some stalls that are hidden in the obscure areas having fewer customers.

Sean Lim Wei Xin

FORUM ONLINE

ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFIED SECURITY AGENCIES: Security industry moves towards outcome-based approach.

MORE LETTERS ON www.straitstimes.com
Join readers in sharing heartwarming stories at www.facebook.com/groups/whatsgd/

Tap Iskandar corridor to grow our economy

I am optimistic the recent announcement by the Malaysian government to expand the Iskandar corridor will help the growth of our economy (Malaysia doubles size of Johor's Iskandar corridor, Feb 23).

Singapore and Malaysia share many similarities.

Such proximity breeds familiarity and ease of integration when businesses expand overseas.

Both countries share similar legal infrastructure, too, and their cheaper labour supply could support the nascent technology-linked sectors, such as agritech and foodtech, in Singapore.

Agritech refers to the use of technology to improve efficiency and yield, such as biotechnology, novel farm management and supply chain systems, while foodtech involves innovation higher up the supply chain.

Our agricultural technology companies such as Sustenir, Trendlines, VertiVegies and SmartAHC, could receive a huge boost as they apply the technologies on the land available in Iskandar corridor.

According to business consulting firm Frost and Sullivan, global smart agriculture revenue will hit US$9 billion (S$12 billion) next year.

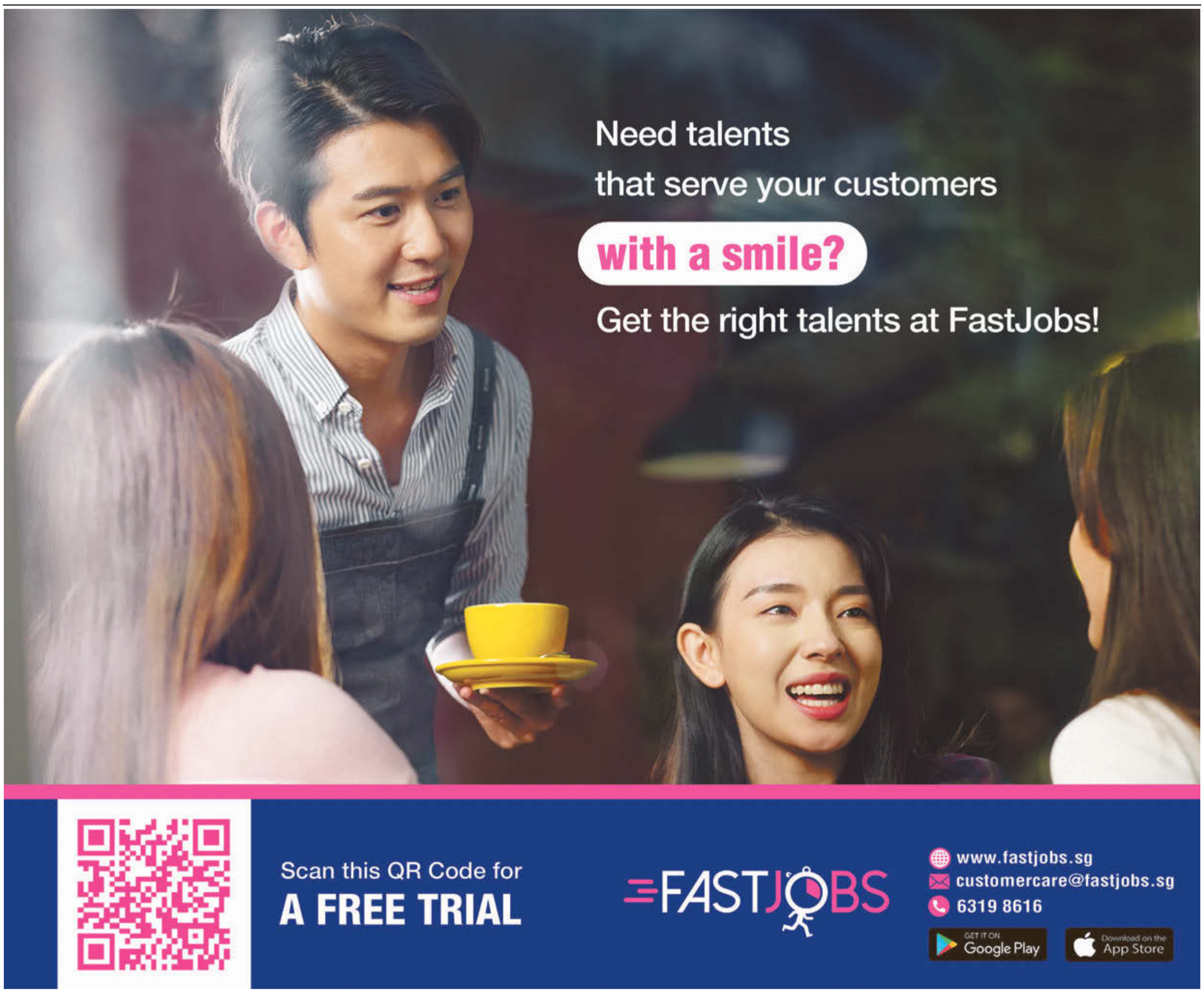
With this development, venture funds or technology accelerators such as ID Capital, The Yield Lab, AgFunder and Temasek Life Sciences Accelerator could increase their investment in indoor farming, or a listed company such as Oceanus could increase its capital in aquaculture research.

Working with the Iskandar corridor and with technology could effectively help us overcome our arable land scarcity, and we could produce much more food at a location that is just a two-hour drive from Singapore.

It would also allow us to diversify our reliance on traditional food sources.

Singapore is home to a small community of farmers presently. With affordable land leases from the Iskandar corridor and tech-savvy local companies and entrepreneurs, our country stands a chance to be a global leader in the agritech and foodtech space.

Edward Tay Wee Meng



Make errant drivers display symbols on cars signifying offence

The announcement to introduce harsher penalties for driving offences is long overdue (Harsher penalties on the cards for driving offences, Feb 22).

A driver has to undergo extensive training, learn the rules and pass a test to be licensed to handle a vehicle. But as soon as a licence is issued, most rules are disregarded.

One of the most obvious examples is drivers not stopping at zebra crossings when there is a pedestrian crossing the road.

This is an immediate failure during a test, indicating the seriousness of the offence.

However, one has to only stand near a zebra crossing to observe how often this rule is blatantly ignored, even when a pedestrian is actually crossing the road.

Many drivers regard their cars as status symbols. They think that because they can afford to buy an expensive car, they have a right to drive as they please. This idea is so ingrained in them that it is almost impossible to change.

Small fines and derisory jail sentences have done little to address the problem.

Hopefully, the new proposal to forfeit cars in cases of dangerous driving is one that might be able to change this mindset, and it should include all cases of careless, negligent, inconsiderate and dangerous driving, including drink-driving cases.

In such cases, the vehicles should be impounded for a period of time commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.

Notices with the errant driver's name and details should be put on prominent public display.

After the period of incarceration, the driver must display, in a prominent spot on his car, a symbol signifying the driving offence he had committed. The duration for this display should also depend on the seriousness of the offence.

These measures are low-cost, easy to implement and will reveal the extent of the problem, the culprits and the consequences of their action.

A mere fine, negligible compared with the cost of a car, is an insult to victims and their families, whose lives have been shattered.

Hopefully, these new measures will serve as a reminder to all drivers to adopt safer and more considerate driving habits.

Lu Chisen

Public has responsibility to report errant motorists

The Government's plan to increase penalties for dangerous and careless driving by motorists could not have come at a more opportune time (Harsher penalties on the cards for driving offences, Feb 22).

With more vehicles on our roads and a noticeable increase in irresponsible driving, existing law enforcement efforts and deterrent measures do not seem to have the desired effect.

Road manners are often an indicator of how a society has progressed in terms of civil behaviour. One has to only stand by a road junction to observe the lack of courtesy displayed on our roads.

For example, the Highway Code test teaches drivers to use their indicators when turning, switching lanes, negotiating bends, slowing down and overtaking.

Yet, motorists demonstrate an attitude of complacency and apathy.

A whole plethora of other bad practices on the road, such as tailgating, speeding and road-hogging, are common occurrences too.

Members of the public have a civic and moral duty to report recalcitrant motorists to the authorities to make them realise the folly of their ways.

Society should tackle drink-driving effectively from many different directions simultaneously.

Beefed-up surveillance and tougher penalties for drink drivers are some approaches that must be part of the solution so that people will think twice about taking to the road when intoxicated.

Vehicles should also be equipped with devices that detect intoxicated drivers and keep the car from starting, or make it very conspicuous, by, say, flashing its lights, honking the horn or preventing the driver from over-steering.

Though tougher penalties for bad driving come with their own costs, it is clear that increased police surveillance and other strategies must be a component of society's effort to deal with irresponsible driving habits.

V. Subramaniam (Dr)

Bouquets

Help given shows true hawker spirit

My 83-year-old mother had a fall at the Old Airport Road Food Centre recently, and I am extremely grateful for the response of the hawkers and others who came to her aid.

She was eating her porridge near the Xin Mei Congee stall, when she felt dizzy and fell over, hurting herself and dirtying her clothes.

The stall owners, Ms Xu Mei Zhen and Mr Teo Min Chuan, rushed to the NTUC Foodfare management office and Ms Celine Yap and Mr David Tan from the office promptly arrived to assist.

The two of them got some soap and water to wash my mother's legs and feet, as she had lost control of her bowels. Ms Yap also bought her a new pair of pants and offered to walk her home.

For me, this is what hawker culture and the classic hawker spirit is about – celebrating cuisine and community.

A hawker centre is more than just about the food.

It is about the people and the community caring for regular customers who treat the place like a second home.

Everyone who came to my mother's aid did not have to do what they did, but still chose to and, for that, my family is extremely grateful.

Yeo Teck Khoon

Offer solutions to problems rather than raise fines

Simply increasing fines and jail terms for road traffic offences is another case of punishing the behaviour without offering solutions to the problems (Harsher penalties on the cards for driving offences, Feb 22).

A better approach would be to offer ways or provide alternatives to change and correct these bad driving behaviour and habits.

For example, I have noticed that some drivers intentionally slow down when approaching junctions, even when the lights are green.

Some people have suggested installing countdown timers at traffic lights to help approaching drivers react accordingly to the anticipated change in the lights.

Such countdown timers can be installed at accident-prone junctions or busy intersections.

The Traffic Police or the Land Transport Authority should explain why such a system has not been implemented yet.

Another problem is drink-driving. I believe some drinking establishments provide drivers as well as taxi services for those who have had some drinks.

Perhaps enforcement officers should be deployed at major drinking spots to spot the drink drivers before they even get behind the wheel.

Drinking establishments can also work together with taxi companies to provide special subsidised rates for rides home after drinking.

The mechanics can be worked out, but drinking establishments must be roped in to promote the "do not drink and drive" safety message.

Lucy Ng (Madam)

MSF should match adoptive kids to parents

I am happy that society is becoming more open-minded about adoption, but some adoptive parents are turning to parent websites for information and help, and they are subject to risks as a result (Adoption requests pop up on parenting websites, Feb 24).

For the adoptive parents, the whole process can be complex.

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) website provides useful information.

By and large, those who want to take up the much more serious responsibilities of parenting should not be daunted by the process.

However, the more information and help is available, the better for both the child and the parents.

Currently, MSF does not offer child-matching services. One has to look for a potential child through relatives, friends or other parties.

Problems can, thus, arise when adoptive parents resort to searching online or through unrelated third parties. These include overcharging and even scams.

As for parenting preparation, the mandatory Home Study Report includes helpful discussions on family relationships and parenting styles among others.

The focus of the home study, however, is to assess the adoptive parents rather than provide them with help. Moreover, it is carried out for only the adoption of a foreign child or a child under the state's care. It is not a requirement for adopting local children.

Birth parents often have significant personal issues to feel that they cannot look after their child. They may already have financial needs, and medical costs for pregnancy checks and childbirth may be big burden.

There is also the stress of carrying a baby and, quite often, the social stigma in the case of an unwed mother as well as the pain of childbirth, and the guilt and regret which may come with giving up the baby for adoption.

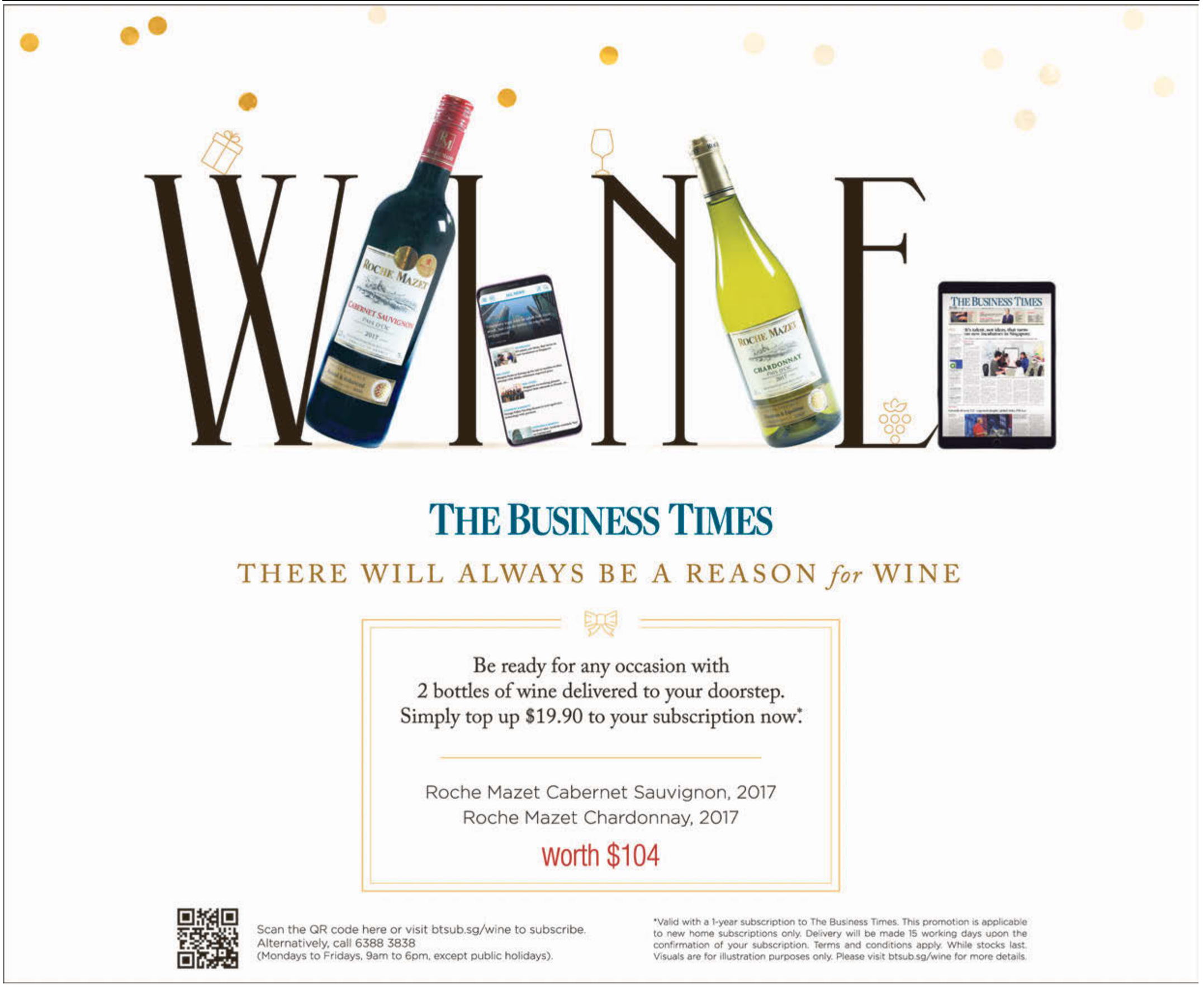
I hope MSF will take up the role of matching all adoptive children in Singapore to their future parents to avoid any malpractice likely to happen in a private process.

A standard process for birth parents should be included to ensure that only genuine cases will proceed, avoiding the previously mentioned problems for adoptive parents.

MSF should provide financial help to cover medical costs and counselling for birth parents during and after the process.

The Home Study Report should also be a requirement for all adoptive parents and include essential parenting preparation.

Clara Yue (Ms)



PICTURE THIS

ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

Final farewell

Multicoloured buntings sit atop this grave at Choa Chu Kang Chinese Cemetery. The buntings signify attempts by loved ones to ensure a smooth journey to the afterlife for those who have died.

Photonico is a website offering high-quality stock photos that celebrate Asian contemporary culture and heritage.

It is a platform that showcases the thousands of editorial and stock photos that our staff and contributing photographers shoot. These photos can be purchased for personal and commercial use at an affordable price.

www.photonico.asia

To contribute photos, get in touch with us at team@photonico.asia

Photonico

SEARCH **BUY** USE

1 **SEARCH** from a vast selection of curated Asian culture and heritage photos.

2 **BUY** photos of old and modern Singapore, travel, nature, food, daily life and more.

3 **USE** the photos on different platforms with our various licensing options.

SHOOT **SHARE** EARN

1 **SHOOT** your own photos of Singapore and Asian street scenes, nature, daily life and travel.

2 **SHARE** them with us and be part of our community of photographers at Photonico.asia

3 **EARN** when your photos are sold with our 50 per cent revenue share programme.

C| BUSINESS

4.1%

GROWTH IN SERVICE SECTOR REVENUE FOR Q4, DOWN FROM 7.2% IN Q3 C2

Some developers extending options to lock in buyers

URA adjusts monthly developers' sales figures to account for lapsed options to purchase

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

Faced with a slow residential market and competition from a multitude of new launches this year, some developers are reportedly adopting an "ingenious sales tactic" to lock in potential buyers who may not be ready to commit to their purchases, according to a report by Credit Suisse's equity research arm.

This has resulted in what it called "the curious case of the rising number of returned units" at some new launches after the July 6 cooling measures last year.

In a typical transaction for a newly launched project, the buyer of a unit who is issued an option to purchase (OTP) must pay 5 per cent of the purchase price as a booking fee, of which 25 per cent may be forfeited should the buyer fail to complete the purchase and returns the unit to the developer.

The buyer would then have forfeited the equivalent of 1.25 per cent of the purchase price.

But in many cases here, buyers have not given up on their purchases.

Instead, the key reason for the high implied number of returned units is what Credit Suisse analyst Louis Chua called "the emergence of an ingenious sales tactic adopted by some developers, where options to purchase are continually reissued to buyers upon expiry of a three-week validity period, without any forfeiture of booking fees".

While there are no official statistics on the number of returned units at new launches, Credit Suisse said the number spiked to 398 in December last year, compared with fewer than 150 in November.

INGENIOUS SALES TACTIC

(There is) the emergence of an ingenious sales tactic adopted by some developers, where options to purchase are continually reissued to buyers upon expiry of a three-week validity period, without any forfeiture of booking fees.

CREDIT SUISSE ANALYST LOUIS CHUA

It worked out the implied number of returned units from the Urban Redevelopment Authority's (URA) monthly sales data for developer launches.

Credit Suisse noted that the trend was limited to projects such as Riverfront Residences, Park Colonial, Stirling Residences, Parc Esta and Whistler Grand.

In response to The Straits Times, URA said developers should grant OTPs only to purchasers who are ready to exercise them within the validity period. It said it was monitoring the situation.

URA said if the purchaser needs more time to exercise the OTP, he or the developer can apply to the Controller of Housing for an extension of the validity period by up to eight weeks from the date of OTP.

"This period will be sufficient for the purchaser to make the necessary arrangements to exercise the OTP, e.g. obtain a bank loan," the URA spokesman said.

"To ensure the accuracy of our data, we have started to make adjustments to the monthly developers' sales figures from January 2019 to account for lapsed OTPs that were declared by developers to URA."

Asked about the report, Mr Chng Chee Beow, executive director of Logan Property Singapore, the joint developer of Stirling Residences, said: "If there is a genuine buyer, we will extend the OTP. Some developers may allow extensions up to two or three times."

Mr Chia Ngiang Hong, City Developments' group general manager, said: "To date, 262 OTPs have been issued (for Whistler Grand) and more than half have been exercised, with the rest progressively to be exercised.

"As with most projects, OTPs typically lapsed or were re-issued due to various reasons such as (buyers') change of mind, request for addition and/or deletion of name, or change of unit. Moreover, (following the cooling measures), some home buyers including HDB upgraders required more time to arrange their finances and loans."

Mr Chia said the adjustment URA made to reflect the actual number of units sold is a positive move that provides greater accuracy and prevents misunderstanding of the sales data.

gleong@sph.com.sg

Bombardier's Global 6000 aircraft at a ground-breaking ceremony for its service centre expansion in Seletar yesterday. The expansion will see the facility's staff strength grow from 150 currently to 300 by 2020.
ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Bombardier investing $85m to expand S'pore service centre

GROWING AEROSPACE HUB

Bombardier's expansion in Singapore is testament to our attractiveness as an aerospace hub, and our ability to capture growth opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region.

MR TAN KONG HWEE, executive director for capital goods at the Economic Development Board.

Zhaki Abdullah

Canadian aerospace firm Bombardier is quadrupling the size of its Singapore service centre, as part of efforts to enhance its position in the Asia-Pacific region, at a cost of $85 million.

Located at JTC Corporation's Seletar Aerospace Park, the centre, which currently spans 9,260 sq m, will grow to 40,000 sq m – or the size of five football fields – by 2020.

A ground-breaking ceremony for the expanded facility was held yesterday.

The expansion will see the centre offer a range of maintenance, refurbishment and modification services, and will also include the introduction of features such as a 3,500 sq m paint facility and an integrated parts depot.

The expanded service centre, which will cater to business jets such as Bombardier's new Global 7500 aircraft, will be able to support more than 2,000 visits a year, a Bombardier spokesman said.

Based in Montreal, the plane and train manufacturer currently operates in 28 countries worldwide, and posted revenues of US$16.2 billion (S$21.8 billion) last year.It currently employs 68,000 workers worldwide, with 150 people at its service centre in Singapore.

Bombardier customer experience vice-president and general manager Jean-Christophe Gallagher said the expansion will see the Singapore facility's staff strength grow to 300 by 2020, "bringing more high-paying jobs to Singapore and providing an important economic engine" to Singapore's aerospace sector.

Mr Jim Carr, Canada's Minister of International Trade Diversification, said: "This important Canadian investment in Singapore is a platform that will create new opportunities for Canadian business in the region, and further diversify Canada's export markets."

Meanwhile, Canadian High Commissioner to Singapore, Ms Lynn McDonald, noted that Bombardier's agreements with educational institutions here would help ensure the creation of "highly skilled, high-paying aerospace jobs for years to come".

Mr Tan Kong Hwee, executive director for capital goods at the Economic Development Board, said: "Bombardier's expansion in Singapore is testament to our attractiveness as an aerospace hub, and our ability to capture growth opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region."

Singapore's aerospace sector employs more than 20,000 people, and the Republic makes up more than 25 per cent of the Asian maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) market, as well as 10 per cent of the global MRO market.

There are more than 130 aerospace companies here. These include Rolls-Royce, which has a $700 million campus in Seletar and makes up more than 15 per cent of the Republic's aerospace output.

Last October, Bombardier began work on the expansion of its service centre at the Miami-Opa Locka Executive Airport. The Florida centre, which is also expected to be completed in 2020, aims to grow its maintenance capabilities in North America.

A Bombardier spokesman said: "These major investments and expansions are the next steps in providing worldwide customers with new, enhanced maintenance and refurbishment options."

Speaking at the event, JTC assistant chief executive Alvin Tan said the industrial land agency will begin work on a third phase of standard factories at the Seletar Aerospace Park later this year.These factories will better cater to the needs of firms, which are employing more automation, he added.

azhaki@sph.com.sg

MAS sees 2019 growth moderating towards more sustainable pace

It's not a bad outcome; no need to stimulate economy: Ravi Menon

Aw Cheng Wei

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) expects this year's economic growth to come in at 2.5 per cent or "a touch lower", bringing it closer to its potential.

"This is not a bad outcome," said MAS managing director Ravi Menon. "It will bring the level of GDP (gross domestic product) closer to its potential. There is no need to stimulate the economy."

He explained at the Citibank Asia Pacific Investors Conference yesterday that the Singapore economy is "moderating towards a more sustainable pace" in line with the global economy.

The economy did well last year by growing 3.2 per cent but Mr Menon expects external demand to be softer this year, "reflecting slower global GDP growth and the maturing of the global tech cycle".

"Manufacturing and trade-related sectors will feel most of the external drag," he said.

He added that the financial service sector is "likely to continue to outpace the overall economy on the back of ongoing digital transformation", but growth will be slower than last year's as credit demand in the region weakens.

"If there is a sharper slowdown, Singapore's healthy macroeconomic position gives it the resilience to absorb the shock," Mr Menon said. The Republic also has the policy space to mitigate the impact, he added.

"Central banks from the (United States Federal Reserve to the European Central Bank to the Bank of England) are exercising more patience and flexibility," he said in response to a question on whether he expects central banks in the region to loosen monetary policy. "There is room to take a pause and watch how the data pans out."

The US central bank's recent decision to adopt a wait-and-see approach regarding future policy changes is the "most significant expression of this new mood", he said.

"It has helped to allay investor anxiety over the future pace of rate hikes and its impact on growth in both the US and global economies."

The move also resulted in "a significant easing of financial conditions globally and helped lift sentiments in the near term", he said, pointing out that the easing will provide Asia with "some relief and policy space".

"Still, central banks have to assess the balance of risks carefully," he warned, explaining that "a premature loosening of monetary policy could risk undoing recent gains in restoring currency stability".

Mr Menon's comments come as the MAS prepares to announce its monetary policy stance in April after recent disappointing economic data. The central bank manages policy through changes to the exchange rate rather than interest rates.

Singapore reported its slowest year-on-year economic growth in the fourth quarter, its biggest fall in exports and the largest drop in factory output in more than two years.

"What we will do (for the next monetary policy decision) depends on the growth and inflation outlook then," he said, adding that the monetary policy remains appropriate.

The MAS allowed the Singdollar to rise slightly faster for the first time in six years last April, and tightened monetary policy again in October as the economy continued to expand steadily then.

A stronger Singdollar that corresponds to a tighter monetary policy counters inflation by making imports cheaper, while a weaker Singdollar can help lift economic growth by making exports cheaper abroad.

awcw@sph.com.sg

BETTER TO WAIT AND SEE

Central banks from the (United States Federal Reserve to the European Central Bank to the Bank of England) are exercising more patience and flexibility... There is room to take a pause and watch how the data pans out.

MAS MANAGING DIRECTOR RAVI MENON, in response to a question on whether he expects central banks in the region to loosen monetary policy.

Keppel, SPH get 90.15% of M1 shares; telco to be delisted

The buyout offer for Singapore's third-largest telco M1 has crossed a key threshold.

Keppel Corp and Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) now hold 90.15 per cent of M1's shares through their joint venture firm Konnectivity, according to an exchange filing yesterday.

"Strong support for the offer by shareholders has resulted in M1 ceasing to have at least 10 per cent of the total number of shares held by the public," said Keppel and SPH in the filing.

This means M1 will be delisted after the close of the voluntary general offer, as it no longer meets the free float requirement of the Singapore Exchange (SGX).

Konnectivity, which is majority owned by Keppel, and its concert parties currently control 835.1 million shares in M1.

Shareholders who may not want to hold shares in an unlisted company should consider accepting Konnectivity's offer of $2.06 per share by the extended deadline of March 18, said the exchange filing.

Keppel and SPH announced in December last year their "firm intention" to make a voluntary general offer of $2.06 per share for the remaining M1 shares that they do not own.

It was reported earlier this month that Keppel and SPH had obtained majority control of M1. This followed Axiata Group's acceptance of their joint offer for its entire stake of 28.6 per cent.

Axiata is a long-term shareholder of M1, which was listed on the SGX in 2002.

A consortium – comprising Keppel Group, SPH, Cable & Wireless and Hong Kong Telecom – formed M1 in 1994 to enter the mobile telecommunications market in Singapore.

The then fledgling telco obtained the licence in May 1995 to operate Singapore's second cellular telephone and radio paging services.

Aw Cheng Wei

Growth in service sector revenue eases to 4.1% in Q4

The service industries saw more takings in the last quarter of 2018, although growth was slower than before, according to data from the Department of Statistics (SingStat) yesterday.

Overall services' business receipts were 4.1 per cent higher than in the same period the year before, but eased from third-quarter revenue growth, which was revised downwards to 7.2 per cent.

This took full-year revenue growth to 6.8 per cent, the same level seen in 2017. While led by finance and insurance, all the service industries polled reported higher turnover.

Improvement in the quarter was fuelled by the information and communications service industry, where revenue rose 7.2 per cent, as well as financial and insurance, which was up by 6.9 per cent.

Turnover for transport and storage services was up by 6.1 per cent, with SingStat noting that the water transport segment saw higher demand for its services in the quarter.

Meanwhile, health and social services' receipts grew by 5.4 per cent.

Revenue growth for business services – which include real estate, travel, security and professional services –cooled to 1.3 per cent, from 5.8 per cent in the previous quarter.

But two segments saw receipts shrink: education, where revenue declined by 2.6 per cent; and recreation and personal services, which was down by 1.3 per cent on lower contributions from attractions.

SingStat said the lower turnover in education reflects a payment cycle where higher education institutions tend to collect more tuition and fees in the first and third quarters.

On a quarterly basis, business receipts rose by 2.2 per cent in the fourth quarter on the three months prior, compared with 1.2 per cent quarter-on-quarter growth previously.

The Business Receipts Index, which leaves out wholesale and retail trade and accommodation and food services, measures short-term changes in services' income from business operations on a quarterly basis.

Recent economic data from the Ministry of Trade and Industry showed growth in all service industries last year, led by information and communications, and finance and insurance.

6.8%

Growth in full-year revenue, the same level seen in 2017. While led by finance and insurance, all the service industries polled reported higher turnover.

Passengers at Changi Airport's check-in counters. The Department of Statistics said revenue growth for business services – which include real estate, travel, security and professional services – cooled to 1.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year, from 5.8 per cent in the previous quarter. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

VOLUNTARY PRODUCT RECALL

Iona Water Dispenser Model No. GLWD700

Iona is voluntarily recalling units of Water Dispenser Model GLWD700 with serial numbers beginning with 13AR**, 14AR** and 14AP** due to a fire risk that may be associated with the wear and tear of an internal electrical relay on the circuit board.

Model No. GLWD700

Affected Serial No:
13AR7000001 - 13AR7001140
14AR7000001 - 14AR7002280
14AP7000001 - 14AP7002280

If your appliance is affected, please stop using this product immediately. Send your product back to our service centre in exchange for a $30 Iona product voucher:

233 Ubi Ave 4, Intrepid Warehouse Complex, Singapore 408818 or call Iona at **67432926** between 9am and 530pm weekdays, or email **cs@iona.com.sg**.

This precautionary recall underlines Iona's commitment to the highest standard of quality and reliability. We thank you for your co-operation and apologize for any inconvenience caused.

iona a new life begins

Goldland International Pte Ltd
www.iona.com.sg

PRIME CHINATOWN • FULL COMMERCIAL • 100% TENANTED

SOUTH BRIDGE ROAD

- 3-storey shophouse
- Rare full F&B approval
- Site area: Approx. 97.4 sq m / 1,049 sq ft
- Floor area: Approx. 250.8 sq m / 2,700 sq ft
- Excellent main road frontage
- Public car park at the back of the property
- Less than 200m from Chinatown MRT Interchange and Telok Ayer MRT stations

SAGO STREET

- 3-storey shophouse
- Site area: Approx. 103.9 sq m / 1,119 sq ft
- Floor area: Approx. 297.3 sq m / 3,200 sq ft
- Right next to the grand Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum
- Immediate catchment of tourists
- Less than 100m from the upcoming Maxwell MRT station

TEMPLE STREET

- 999-year, akin freehold
- Rare F&B approval
- 3-story with mezzanine shophouse
- Site area: Approx. 1,100 sq ft
- Floor area: Approx. 3,350 sq ft
- Extremely high traffic flow
- Minutes' walk to Chinatown MRT Interchange Station

Contact Capital Markets
Yap Hui Yee (CEA Reg No. R041545Z) **9852 3687**
Sophia Lim (CEA Reg No.: R056087E) **9878 2372**
CBRE Agency License No.: L3002163I

999-Year Tenure Offices At City Hall

Choice Units: Approx. 1,001 sq ft to 4,262 sq ft

- Regular layout units with MBS facing views
- Next to City Hall MRT Interchange Station
- Proximity to landmarks including National Gallery, Capitol, St Andrew Cathedral & Padang
- Vacant units ideal for owner occupation
- No Additional Buyers' Stamp Duty and Sellers' Stamp Duty
- No restrictions on foreign ownership

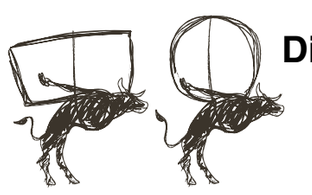
Contact Capital Markets:
CHEN TIANYI Salesperson Reg. No.: R053702D **8160 8808**
SOPHIA LIM Salesperson Reg. No.: R056087E **9878 2372**
CBRE Agency License No.: L3002163I

Developers re-issuing options as buyers get cold feet in cooling market

Credit Suisse says two-thirds of options in December developer sales were not exercised

Today in THE BUSINESS TIMES

Call 6289 8822 or e-mail notices@sph.com.sg to publicise your IPOs & other offerings



Discover Greener Pastures

Call 6289 8822 or e-mail notices@sph.com.sg to place your Change of Address Notices

NOTICES

China eyes tax breaks to draw global funds

The Lujiazui financial district of Pudong in Shanghai. Attracting global funds is a key part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's push to build a more institutionally driven financial system that is less prone to the boom-and-bust cycles that have plagued China. PHOTO: REUTERS

Move an attempt by the authorities to reverse swelling outflows to international tax havens

BEIJING • China is considering tax breaks to attract more global funds to register in the country and reverse swelling outflows to international tax havens, people with knowledge of the matter said.

The Ministry of Finance has enlisted a global accounting firm to conduct due diligence ahead of a potential feasibility study on a capital gains tax exemption, the people said, asking not to be identified. The deliberations are at a preliminary stage, and there are regulatory hurdles that would need to be cleared first.

Attracting international funds is a key part of President Xi Jinping's push to build a more institutionally driven financial system that is less prone to the boom-and-bust cycles that have plagued China.

International funds registered in China are now subject to taxes of up to 25 per cent on capital gains earned worldwide, marring the nation's appeal as a base.

The Ministry of Finance did not immediately respond to a fax seeking comment.

Dropping the levy could also reduce the propensity of local fund managers to use offshore tax havens as a base. The Cayman Islands and British Virgin Islands remain second and third only to Hong Kong as the most popular destinations for China's foreign direct investment outflows.

Chinese money flows into the British Virgin Islands jumped almost 60 per cent in 2017 even as overall outflows fell, according to the latest available official data.

The other main benefit for international funds of being domiciled locally is having easier access to domestic investors.

"If there's such a tax break, it would certainly attract funds that invest globally but want to register in China," said Han Kun Law Offices' Beijing-based partner Qi Huaying.

She added: "There are regulatory restrictions around issues such as the use of foreign currencies that would need to be eased first."

Such a move would mirror a similar shift in Hong Kong. The former British colony last year proposed widening tax breaks to include hedge funds and private equity firms that are domiciled in the city. Market watchers said at the time that should encourage more of them to move there, and away from offshore centres such as the Cayman Islands.

Any potential capital gains tax break would be only for funds that invest in foreign currency outside China, the people said. It would not apply to other levies the fund management companies pay locally, they added. It would also apply only to so-called private funds, or those that cater to institutional clients and wealthy individuals, one of the people said. BLOOMBERG

60%

Increase in Chinese money flows into the British Virgin Islands in 2017 even as overall outflows fell, according to the latest available official data.

Axiata mobile wallet joins Singtel's e-payment network

The digital services arm of Malaysia's Axiata Group has signed on to mainboard-listed Singtel's plans for a cross-border electronic payment network, in a tie-up announced yesterday.

Axiata Digital's Boost Malaysia wallet will join the VIA alliance, which telco Singtel launched last October alongside its Thai associate telco AIS and digital bank Kasikornbank to support fuss-free regional e-payments.

The new partnership adds Boost's 3.7 million customers and 66,000 merchant outlets to VIA, which now accepts payments made between the Singtel Dash e-wallet and AIS Global Pay.

This is Dash's first foray into a non-associate market, although Singtel had previously said it planned to roll out VIA across regional associates in Thailand, India, the Philippines and Indonesia. It had also named the e-wallet from China's Ping An Insurance Group as a potential non-telco partner.

Mr Arthur Lang, Singtel's international group chief, said in a statement that the deal with Axiata Digital "gives us presence in an important new market".

"This shows the tremendous potential for us to grow cross-border mobile payments even beyond the countries where Singtel's regional associates operate," he added.

Axiata Digital chief executive Mohd Khairil Abdullah said: "Boost's merchant base is growing at a strong pace and we are looking forward to serving Singtel's e-wallet users when they visit Malaysia. At the same time, we are excited to potentially help drive revenue growth for our merchant partners, which can now benefit from having our neighbours across the Causeway visit their outlets."

Boost, which was launched in January 2017, is "on the path to monetisation or validation" as of the end of last year, according to presentation slides from Axiata Group's most recent full-year earnings briefing.

Under the latest memorandum of understanding, Singtel will also work with Axiata Digital's application programming interface platform Apigate to add the capabilities that will bring more product and service providers onto Singtel's Open Platform digital payment gateway. Open Platform lets mobile customers across Singtel's regional group shop online and pay through either direct carrier billing or mobile wallets from the appropriate telcos.

Axiata Group recently sold its 28.7 per cent stake in Singapore-listed M1, in a general offer led by Keppel Corp and Singapore Press Holdings.

STRONGER PRESENCE

"This shows the tremendous potential for us to grow cross-border mobile payments even beyond the countries where Singtel's regional associates operate."

MR ARTHUR LANG, Singtel's international group chief, on the deal with Axiata Digital.

Lianhe Zaobao Singapore Budget 2019 Business Forum

8 March 2019 (Friday)
9am – 1pm
The Fullerton Hotel Singapore

Dialogue With Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat

In the 2019 Singapore Budget, the government allocated S$4.6 billion to implement economic transformation initiatives to create a vibrant economy. How will local companies leverage on these measures to deal with the challenges in the midst of transformation and innovation?

Lianhe Zaobao's fourth annual Budget Business Forum invites you to join Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat in a face-to-face session to talk about the significance and opinions of the new Budget.

Forum will be conducted in Mandarin.

Dialogue Panellists

Roland Ng
President
Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Teo Siong Seng
Chairman
Singapore Business Federation

Douglas Foo
President
Singapore Manufacturing Federation

Panel Discussion
Digital transformation for new business opportunities

Suan Teck Kin
Head of Research, Global Economics and Markets Research, UOB

Derrick Yap
CEO, PBA Group

Jamie Tan
Founder, Flying Cape

Kawee Chong
CEO, Kinofy

Limited Seats, Register Now!

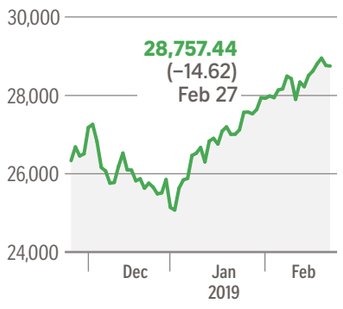
Networking Lunch Registration Fee: $68 nett per participant
Register and pay with a credit card at zbbudget.sphevents.com.sg
OR scan the QR code to register.

Registration is on first-come, first served basis. Seats are limited. Registration fee is non-refundable.
Only successful participants will be notified via email. For enquiries, email to mkgzbpromo@sph.com.sg.

Organiser: 联合早报 LIANHE ZAOBAO
Digital Partner: zaobao.sg 早晚全新
Main Sponsor: UOB
Venue Partner: The Fullerton Hotel Singapore

AN sph EVENT

Hang Seng



Shanghai Comp

Nikkei 225

Dow Jones

BullsAndBears

India-Pakistan conflict spooks Asian markets

Singapore, HK and KL bourses end in the red after news of downed Indian jets

Navin Sregantan

Trading here got off to a positive start yesterday morning, but escalating geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan saw the market swinging into the red in the later session.

The Straits Times Index (STI), which had gained as much as 20 points in the early session, closed 11.64 points, or 0.36 per cent, lower at 3,250.02, with about 1.25 billion securities worth $1.22 billion traded. Losers outnumbered gainers 244 to 174.

Shares in Genting Singapore – the most traded for the day – ended flat at $1.04 with 42.8 million shares traded. On trade volumes in the casino operator, UOB Kay Hian's vice-president of equities and financial products Brandon Leu noted there was "a good hustle between buyers and sellers in the market".

The most actively traded penny stock was KrisEnergy. On Tuesday, the upstream oil and gas firm posted a higher net loss for the fourth quarter of US$97.3 million (S$131 million), up from US$87.6 million in the year-ago period.

It prompted a sell-off as the counter closed 0.6 cent, or 7.4 per cent, lower at 7.5 cents, with 29.9 million shares changing hands.

Of the 30 STI constituents, 19 ended the day in the red.

The trio of counters bearing the Jardine name were among the blue-chip index's best performers.

Jardine Matheson Holdings closed US$1.37, or 2 per cent, higher at US$71.23, and Jardine Strategic Holdings added 57 US cents, or 1.4 per cent, to close at US$40.25. Jardine Cycle & Carriage ended 21 cents, or 0.6 per cent, up at $36.63.

DBS Group Holdings dipped two cents, or 0.1 per cent, to $25.15. OCBC Bank dropped two cents, or 0.2 per cent, to $11.18, while United Overseas Bank ended nine cents, or 0.4 per cent, lower at $25.21.

Elsewhere in Asia, markets that closed before news broke that Pakistan had shot down two Indian fighter jets – Australia, Japan, South Korea and China – ended higher, while those that did not – Hong Kong and Malaysia – closed lower.

The conflict is likely to be a major topic this week.

CMC Markets analyst Margaret Yang said: "Concern about further escalation in the military confrontation would... drive demand for safe havens."

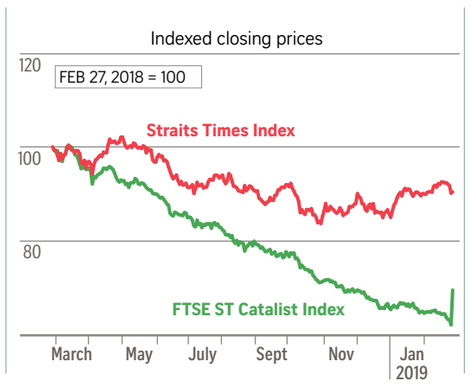
IG market strategist Pan Jingyi noted that data releases like China's February Purchasing Managers' Index and the United States' fourth-quarter gross domestic product data, as well as news on US-China trade talks, could induce further turbulence in the markets.

navinsre@sph.com.sg

DAILY

Straits Times Index

Feb 27, 2019
3,250.02 ▼
-11.64 (-0.36%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
3,284.73
Day low
3,245.71
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)



FTSE ST Catalist Index

Feb 27, 2019
293.55 ▼
-0.54 (-0.18%)
Current streak
4 days
Day high
296.21
Day low
291.91
52-week high
464.01 (March 14, 2018)
52-week low
293.55 (Feb 27, 2019)

DAILY

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Feb 27, 2019
788.82 ▼
-2.36 (-0.30%)
Current streak
5 days
Day high
796.48
Day low
788.50
52-week high
868.02 (April 30, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)

Hyundai spending $55b as car industry transforms

Hyundai Motor joined automakers in pledging massive spending in the years ahead to address the industry's transformation and fend off new competition from the likes of Tesla.

The South Korean maker of the Sonata and Tucson models plans to invest 45.3 trillion won (S$55 billion) in the next five years in the development of new models and technologies for electrified and autonomous vehicles as well as transportation services.

The average annual spending will be 58 per cent more than over the past five years, the company said yesterday.

After a decade-long boom, the world's fifth-biggest carmaker and its competitors are facing cooling demand in China, Europe and the United States.

That challenge is exacerbated by technology shifts such as the popularity of ride-hailing services, which are making vehicle ownership less necessary.

Hyundai Motor said it wants to lead "the paradigm change facing the automotive industry".

The company also said it will achieve an operating profit margin of 7 per cent by 2022.

Its profitability has been less than that in each of the past four years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. BLOOMBERG

58%

Increase in Hyundai's average annual spending compared with that over the past five years.

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY TRADED	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
284	245	Ascendas Reit		281	unch	7919	5.7	1.4
196	161	CapitaCom Trust		192	unch	18245	4.5	1
380	298	CapitaLand		348	-2	6550	3.4	0.8
246	198	CapitaMall Trust		242	-4	10361	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev		919 cd	-7	1754	2.2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro		241 cd	-2	11473	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp		2515 cd	-2	3894	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US	894	-1	357	2.3	-
133	85.5	Genting Sing		104	unch	42791	3.4	1.6
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res		28 cd	unch	25325	2.1	0.6
36.5	23	HPH Trust USD	US	23.5	unch	5520	11.2	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US	726	-3	749	2.8	0.3
7205	1099	JMH USD	US	7123	+137	298	2.2	0.8
4078	3155	JSH USD	US	4025	+57	260	0.8	0.5
3816	2766	Jardine C&C		3663	+21	357	3.1	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp		620 cd	-7	2910	4.8	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank		1118 cd	-2	5158	3.8	1.2
564	455	SATS		509	-6	1447	3.5	3.5
790	672	SGX		785	+3	2951	3.8	9.8
1184	914	SIA		1003	-7	1856	4	1
292	231	SPH		247	-4	2671	5.3	1.1
379	321	ST Engineering		374 cd	-1	4641	4	5.2
328	243	Sembcorp Ind		263 cd	-1	3781	1.5	0.7
358	283	Singtel		302	-7	24645	6.8	1.7
88	57.5	ThaiBev		81.5	+0.5	14201	0.8	4
3037	2380	UOB		2521 cd	-9	2333	4.8	1.2
898	591	UOL		675 cd	-2	1529	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp		1780 cd	-29	1664	3.9	2.2
340	297	Wilmar Intl		323 cd	-12	11546	3.3	0.9
151	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD		146	unch	14619	3.1	1.1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY TRADED	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
284	245	Ascendas Reit		281	unch	7919	5.7	1.4
120	105	Ascott Reit		113	-1	1963	6.3	1
73.5	59	Bumitama Agri		66.5	-1	527	1.1	1.5
178	143	CDL HTrust		160	-1	818	-	1
196	161	CapitaCom Trust		192	unch	18245	4.5	1
380	298	CapitaLand		348	-2	6550	3.4	0.8
246	198	CapitaMall Trust		242	-4	10361	4.8	1.2
164	133	CapitaR China Tr		144	unch	1031	7.1	0.9
1359	780	CityDev		919 cd	-7	1754	2.2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro		241 cd	-2	11473	4.4	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp		2515 cd	-2	3894	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US	894	-1	357	2.3	-
72.5	59	Far East HTrust		65	unch	3564	-	0.7
181	150	First Resources		171	+1	331	4	2.2
232	212	Frasers Cpt Tr		230	-1	1214	5.2	110.6
114	101	Frasers L&I Tr		109	-2	4675	6.3	1.2
133	85.5	Genting Sing		104	unch	42791	3.4	1.6
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res		28 cd	unch	25325	2.1	0.6
224	167	GuocoLand Ltd		187	+1	148	3.7	0.6
36.5	23	HPH Trust USD	US	23.5	unch	5520	11.2	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US	726	-3	749	2.8	0.3
7205	1099	JMH USD	US	7123	+137	298	2.2	0.8
4078	3155	JSH USD	US	4025	+57	260	0.8	0.5
3816	2766	Jardine C&C		3663	+21	357	3.1	1.8
58	44.5	Kep Infra Tr		51	unch	6765	7.3	1.9
835	567	Keppel Corp		620 cd	-7	2910	4.8	1
125	108	Keppel Reit		123	unch	5537	4.5	0.9
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US	206	unch	17	1.5	1.5
186	152	Mapletree Com Tr		178	-1	7311	5.1	1.2
206	184	Mapletree Ind Tr		200	unch	3923	5.9	1.4
141	118	Mapletree Log Tr		139	unch	14274	5.5	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr		125	-1	8226	6	0.9
82.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr		79.5	-0.5	2997	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank		1118 cd	-2	5158	3.8	1.2
194	136	OUE		166 cd	+8	1208	7.8	0.4
87	64.5	OUE HTrust		71.5	-0.5	3527	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl		201	+3	914	3.7	1
58	28	Oxley		33	-0.5	1365	4.5	0.9
288	256	ParkwayLife Reit		283	unch	405	4.5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical		111	unch	1086	2.3	2.5
564	455	SATS		509	-6	1447	3.5	3.5
790	672	SGX		785	+3	2951	3.8	9.8
1184	914	SIA		1003	-7	1856	4	1
335	220	SIA Engineering		242	+2	498	5.4	1.8
292	231	SPH		247	-4	2671	5.3	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT		102	unch	418	5.4	1.1
379	321	ST Engineering		374 cd	-1	4641	4	5.2
328	243	Sembcorp Ind		263 cd	-1	3781	1.5	0.7
235	149	Sembcorp Marine		173	+2	15998	-	1.6
57.5	39	Silverlake Axis		57	+2	11751	5.3	8.3
140	88.5	SingPost		102	+1	6407	3.4	1.4
358	283	Singtel		302	-7	24645	6.8	1.7
252	157	StarHub		161	+1	3369	9.9	5
73.5	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit		69	-1	8115	6.6	0.8
199	163	Suntec Reit		192	unch	8017	5.2	0.9
88	57.5	ThaiBev		81.5	+0.5	14201	0.8	4
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical		7.9	unch	14613	-	2.9
3037	2380	UOB		2521 cd	-9	2333	4.8	1.2
898	591	UOL		675 cd	-2	1529	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp		1780 cd	-29	1664	3.9	2.2
340	297	Wilmar Intl		323 cd	-12	11546	3.3	0.9
224	183	Wing Tai		203	-1	192	3.9	0.5
151	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD		146	unch	14619	3.1	1.1
182	116	Yanlord Land		146	-1	1808	4.7	0.6

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	139	unch	1282	7.4	1
68.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	62	unch	183	6.2	0.7
86.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	85	-0.5	656	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	116	+1	381	5.3	1.3
57.5	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13 cd	-0.1	1915	39.8	0.2
62	48	Banyan Tree	59.5	+0.5	61	1.7	0.8
333	115	Best World	256	+3	19078	2.4	8.1
85.5	76	Boustead	80	-0.5	175	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	87.5 cd	unch	60	1.7	3
632	521	Bukit Sembawang	563	-2	35	3.2	1.1
84.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	71.5	-0.5	2455	8.3	1.1
52	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	394	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	139	+6	2100	3.2	1.2
46	29.5	China Everbright	34.5	-0.5	1770	2.9	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunsine	134	+1	1174	2.2	1.5
103	64	Chip Eng Seng	75 cd	unch	3559	5.3	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	37	+0.5	6464	-	1.6
700	302	Delong	584	+16	19	-	0.5
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	19.6	unch	95	9.4	1.2
77.5	67.5	EC World Reit	76.5 cd	-0.5	426	8.1	0.9
58.5	47	ESR-REIT	54	unch	974	7.1	1.2
140	92	First Reit	108	+2	1969	8	1.1
152	135	Frasers Com Tr	148	-1	1216	6.5	0.9
79.5	66.5	Frasers HTrust	72.5	unch	606	-	1
25.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	18.7	unch	387	5.3	1.1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78.5	-0.5	630	3.6	2.4
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	54	-1	75	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	138	+4	11775	3.6	2
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	273	unch	108	4.8	0.7
80.5	71	IREIT Global	74 xd	-2.5	149	7.6	1
36	18.3	Indofood Agri	21.5	unch	609	-	0.3
84	43	Japfa	79	+1.5	3536	0.6	1.5
75	49	KSH	51.5	-0.5	50	4.3	0.9
85	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	66.5	unch	118	9.4	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	147	unch	2077	5	1.4
190	132	Keppel T&T	189	+1	33	-	1.2
11.9	7	KrisEnergy	7.5	-0.6	29916	-	0.9
69	44.5	Lian Beng	50.5	+0.5	178	4.5	0.4
40.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	20 cd	-0.5	2174	10.2	0.7
53	26	MM2 Asia	28	-0.5	590	-	1.6
95	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	83.5	-0.5	2020	6.7	0.7
120	95	Metro	101	+1	158	5	0.6
19	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
63.4	45	OUE Com Reit	50	-0.5	2163	7	0.7
65	54	PEC	55.5	-1	143	3.6	0.6
39	17	POSH	18	unch	8	-	0.7
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	47.5	unch	886	3.4	3.4
108	55.5	QAF Ltd	73.5	+3.5	815	6.8	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	112	+2	76	2.1	3.6
54.5	22	SIIC Environment	37.5	+1	1551	5.3	0.6
45	38.5	Sabana Reit	42	-0.5	746	7.6	0.7
119	92.5	Sheng Siong	109 cd	unch	1315	3.1	5.6
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	6.7	-0.2	5950	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	59.5	-0.5	798	8.9	0.9
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	93.5	-1.5	473	-	0.8
46	32.5	Tuan Sing	38.5 cd	unch	339	2.3	0.4
136	54	UMS	74 cd	+1	7590	5.4	1.7
112	58.5	Valuetronics	72.5	unch	5652	6.3	1.6
15	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.3	-0.1	2867	-	0.3
48.5	24	Yoma Strategic	33.5	unch	4344	0.7	0.9
33	16.1	Yongnam	17.5	+0.2	250	-	0.3

ETFs

52-Week High	52-Week Low	Counter	Last Sale	+/-	Vol ('000)	Last Quote Buy	Last Quote Sell
116.9	110	ABF SG Bond ETF	113.2	-	257	113	113.2
93.8	82.5	CIMB APAC Div US$	US88.8	-	-	91.7	92.4
1176	626	CIMBASEAN40 US$	US1005	-	-	1000	1008
12851	11025	GLD US$	US12538	+27	2	12527	12536
1402	1330	IS ASIA HYG S$D	1391cd	-1	0	1386	1388
1070	970	IS ASIA HYG US$	US1031cd	+8	12	1026	1035
1055	1002	IS Asia BND US	US1042cd	-	-	1044	1049
1016	467	IS MS INDIA US$	US820	-5	15	820	823
104.5	94.4	Lion-Phillip S-REIT	104	-0.1	1078	103.9	104.5
375	302	Nikko AM STI ETF	332	-1	125	331	333
102	98.8	NikkoAM SGD IGBond ETF	100.3	-	166	100.2	100.4
86	76.3	NikkoAM-STC A_REIT US$	US86	-	-	88	88.3
119.8	104.7	NikkoAM-STC Asia REIT	119	+0.1	343	118.8	119
107.2	99	PHIL SING INC	106.6	-0.3	463	106	107
130	93.2	Phil Ap Div Reit US$	US104.2	-0.3	15	104.1	104.4
365.8	300	STI ETF	324.7	-1.3	227	324	325
4031	3373	XT ASX200 US$	US3843	-	-	-	-
685.5	375.1	XT MSBrazil US$	US525.9	+12.8	5	520.8	526.3
2090	1470	XT MSCHINA US$	US1786	+6	9	1756	1785
8311	6252	XT MSKorea US$	US7002	-	-	7020	-
203.6	154.9	XT MSPHILS US$	US191.4	-	-	184	197
634	530	XT MSPacXJp US$	US607	-	-	611	620
3014	2532	XT MSTaiwan US$	US2640	-	-	2630	-
5292	4210	XT S&P500 US$	US5089	-3	0	-	-
4044	2850	XT Vietnam US$	US3379	-	-	3249	-

Gainers

BY CENTS

	CLOSE	UP	%
JMH USD	7123	184.6	2.0
JSH USD	4025	76.8	1.4
Creative	517	28.0	5.7
Jardine C&C	3663	21.0	0.6
Delong	584	16.0	2.8
OUE	166	8.0	5.1
Top Global	27.5	7.0	34.1
China Aviation	139	6.0	4.5
United Engineers	246	6.0	2.5
Great Eastern	2650	5.0	0.2

BY PERCENTAGE

	CLOSE	%	UP
Compact Metal	3.7	42.3	1.1
Metech Intl	9.7	38.6	2.7
IEV	3.7	37.0	1.0
Top Global	27.5	34.1	7.0
CWX Global	0.4	33.3	0.1
Disa	0.4	33.3	0.1
KLW Hldgs	0.5	25.0	0.1
Enviro-Hub	3.7	23.3	0.7
Asia Vets	18	20.0	3.0
Tung Lok Rest	16.5	17.9	2.5

Losers

BY CENTS

	CLOSE	DOWN	%
Venture Corp	1780	-29.0	-1.6
UOI	702	-23.0	-3.2
Wilmar Intl	323	-12.0	-3.6
SingIndexFund	215	-10.0	-4.4
UOB	2521	-9.0	-0.4
CityDev	919	-7.0	-0.8
Keppel Corp	620	-7.0	-1.1
SIA	1003	-7.0	-0.7
Singtel	302	-7.0	-2.3
Singtel 10	302	-7.0	-2.3

BY PERCENTAGE

	CLOSE	%	DOWN
AnnAik	7.4	-26.0	-2.6
Oceanus	0.3	-25.0	-0.1
Casa	6	-24.1	-1.9
MegaChem	26.5	-17.2	-5.5
Swee Hong	0.5	-16.7	-0.1
8Telecom	4.6	-14.8	-0.8
Net Pacific Fin	2.3	-14.8	-0.4
Libra	7.6	-14.6	-1.3
Parkson Retail	2	-13.0	-0.3
Viking Offshore	0.7	-12.5	-0.1

Most active

	VOLUME
Genting Sing	42,791,900
RHT HealthTrust	31,960,000
KrisEnergy	29,916,700
Rex Intl	25,678,300
Golden Agri-Res	25,325,300
Singtel	24,645,500
AEM	22,215,100
Sunpower	20,867,500
Best World	19,078,300
Fu Yu	18,758,800
Market volume	1,243,066,000

	VALUE ($)
DBS Grp	98,197,045
Singtel	75,250,866
UOB	58,913,816
OCBC Bank	57,844,713
Best World	50,983,305
Genting Sing	44,911,890
Wilmar Intl	37,817,194
CapitaCom Trust	35,384,036
Venture Corp	29,811,366
JMH USD	28,621,591
Market value	1,178,792,000

Price and volume movers

	VOL	CLOSE($)	CHANGE	+/-
Compact Metal	4,139.3	0.037	+0.011	+42.31
MegaChem	10.0	0.265	-0.055	-17.19
Top Global	14.1	0.275	+0.070	+34.15
Enviro-Hub	300.0	0.037	+0.007	+23.33
AP Oil	343.2	0.205	+0.015	+7.90
Metech Intl	310.0	0.097	+0.027	+38.57
Casa	32.9	0.060	-0.019	-24.05
Libra	551.2	0.076	-0.013	-14.61
Net Pacific Fin	50.0	0.023	-0.004	-14.82
UG Healthcare	1,742.1	0.200	+0.015	+8.11

Shows the stocks with the highest combination of price change and of daily activity relative to the three-month average volume

Bonds

Company	Last Sale	+or-	Vol ('000)
CapMallTrb3.08%21022	101.2	unch	5
CityDev NCCPS	108	-	-
DBS Bk 4.7% NCPS	10500	+2	1
FPTrea 3.65%n220522	101.5	+0.3	3
Hyflux 6% CPS	6537	susp	-
UE Pref	190 cd	-	-

Local fintech Rely raises seven-figure sum

Pre-series A funds will fuel growth in region, support retail tie-ups

Singapore fintech start-up Rely has raised a seven-figure sum in pre-series A funding, led by commercial financier Goldbell Financial Services.

Other investors include Singapore-based family office Octava and investors from the financial and technology sectors.

Rely will use the funds to expand in the region, scale up its team and support more regional retail partnerships.

Its "buy now, pay later" service allows shoppers to split payment for purchases into three equal, interest-free monthly instalments by linking a debit card to their Rely account.

Rely utilises artificial intelligence and machine learning to determine shoppers' repayment capabilities for each transaction.

Spending limits are set for each consumer to encourage responsible spending, and safeguards are also put in place to ensure that shoppers repay on time. Further purchases cannot be made if payments are not made on time.

Rely said retailers who offer its service have experienced an increase of 20 per cent to 40 per cent in conversion rate and order values, with millennials making up 75 per cent of "buy now, pay later" transactions.

The start-up has partnerships with e-commerce retailers such as Zalora, Zilingo and Fitlion.

Mr Hizam Ismail, Rely's chief executive and co-founder, said: "Millennials have distinctive spending habits from the past generations. They know what they want, and they seek instant gratification when it comes to their purchases.

"At the same time, they are also cautious when it comes to their spending and are wary of falling into credit card debt.

"Rely caters to these millennials and the relationship between what they want and what they think they ought to do, allowing them to be effortlessly in control of the way they choose to handle their finances."

Goldbell Financial Services CEO Alex Chua said the e-commerce industry in Singapore and Southeast Asia has grown tremendously since its inception, and Goldbell "recognises the 'buy now, pay later' industry in the region to be ripe with potential and complementary to the e-commerce industry at this stage".

CapitaLand's Raffles City Chongqing. The Credo I China fund will invest in offshore US dollar-denominated subordinated instruments for real estate in China's first- and second-tier cities. PHOTO: CAPITALAND

CapitaLand's first closing of debt fund raises over 70% of $1b target

CapitaLand announced the first closing of the group's debut discretionary real estate debt fund, with a target capital raise of US$750 million (S$1 billion).

It has raised over 70 per cent of the capital, or US$556 million, for the fund's first closing, with subsequent commitments from major institutional investors expected later this year, it said.

The Credo I China fund will invest in offshore US dollar-denominated subordinated instruments for real estate in China's first- and second-tier cities, the group said in an exchange filing yesterday morning before the market opened.

It added that the fund will focus on loans and securities of "high-quality real estate covering commercial, retail, residential, logistics and industrial properties".

10%

Stake that CapitaLand will hold in the fund, which is set to be one of China's largest real estate debt funds, according to the group.

The property developer will hold a 10 per cent stake in the fund, which is set to be one of China's largest real estate debt funds, according to the group.

CapitaLand president and group chief executive officer Lee Chee Koon said the group is delighted with the strong investor participation in the fund, and that its fund management business is an integral part of CapitaLand's strategy.

"Credo I China will broaden CapitaLand's fund offerings to real estate debts, going beyond our existing 15 private equity funds, which focus primarily on direct investment in property projects," he added.

Separately, CapitaLand's president for China and investment management, Mr Lucas Loh, said the fund comes at an opportune time as a "significant volume of China's commercial real estate loans are due for refinancing within the next few years, while bank regulatory changes and deleveraging measures have tightened the amount of credit available to borrowers, prompting them to turn to non-bank lenders".

He added that the Credo I China fund will also augment CapitaLand's business in China through investment in real estate debts.

CompanyBriefs

Alliance Mineral Assets

Catalist-listed miner Alliance Mineral Assets yesterday said its chief financial officer Shaun Menezes resigned last month to "pursue other career opportunities", and that the late lodgement of the announcement was due to an "administrative oversight".

Mr Menezes served as the company's CFO for slightly more than a year since Nov 21, 2017, and resigned with effect from Jan 14.

Over the past 12 months, there have been seven cessations of appointments related to key personnel in the company, a regulatory filing yesterday showed.

Nonetheless, in its filing with the Singapore bourse, Alliance Mineral Assets noted that its sponsor, PrimePartners Corporate Finance, is satisfied that there are no material reasons for the cessation of Mr Menezes' appointment, other than those disclosed in its announcement.

"In addition, there are no concerns with regard to the financial reporting that led to the departure of Mr Menezes, and there are no disagreements between Mr Menezes and the company's board of directors with regard to the practices that will have an impact on the company's financial reporting," the company said.

Mr Menezes was responsible for the group's finance and accounting functions. He was also in charge of overseeing the group's financial operations, treasury and tax activities.

Mr Craig Hasson, CFO of Alliance Mineral Asset's subsidiary, Tawana Resources NL, is currently undertaking the roles and responsibilities of Mr Menezes, who owns some 1.125 million shares in the company.

China Everbright Water

Mainboard-listed China Everbright Water moved one step closer to a dual listing in Hong Kong. On Tuesday, the firm submitted draft application proofs with the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong ahead of a planned listing on its mainboard.

The expected timetable and other details on the offering will be disclosed only after the final prospectus is registered.

China Everbright Water, which builds and manages water treatment plants, was listed in Singapore in 2014 through the acquisition of HanKore via a reverse takeover.

The group said that from 2015 to 2017, the growth rates of its revenue and net profit were one of the highest compared with companies listed in Hong Kong with a similar business scope. China International Capital Corporation Hong Kong Securities and China Everbright Capital are the joint sponsors for the Hong Kong listing.

Interbank currency rates

Feb 27

Currencies	Against S$ Bid	Against S$ Offer	Against US$ Bid	Against US$ Offer
S$/US$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9671	0.9681	0.7176	0.7181
Canadian dollar	1.0232	1.0240	0.7595	0.7592
Euro	1.5330	1.5341	1.1375	1.1379
NZ dollar	0.9283	0.9292	0.6888	0.6892
Sterling pound	1.7862	1.7874	1.3254	1.3258
US dollar	1.3477	1.3482	-	-
S$/US$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.1573	20.1693	14.9568	14.9602
Danish kroner	20.5473	20.5590	15.2462	15.2492
Hong Kong dollar	17.17	17.18	12.7397	12.7398
Indian Rupee	1.89	1.89	1.4027	1.4029
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	1.2209	1.2216	0.9059	0.9061
Korean won	0.1204	0.1205	0.0894	0.0894
Malaysian ringgit	33.10	33.15	24.5640	24.5881
New Taiwan dollar	4.3792	4.3823	3.2494	3.2504
Norwegian krone	15.7355	15.7506	11.6758	11.6827
Philippine peso	2.5943	2.5972	1.9250	1.9264
Saudi riyal	35.9339	35.9491	26.6631	26.6645
Swedish krona	14.5131	14.5229	10.7688	10.7720
Swiss franc	134.8239	134.9279	100.0400	100.0801
Thai Baht	4.2893	4.2936	3.1827	3.1847

Source: OCBC

Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS — Feb 27

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	Day's High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.84	101.92	101.82
5-Year	N519100A	2.000%	01-Feb-24	99.75	99.95	99.70
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.23	103.75	103.20
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	111.11	111.80	111.15
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	96.42	97.10	97.00
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	102.25	103.15	102.60

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

Feb 26	Index	In local curr % dy Change	In local curr % yr Change
World Preliminary	1599.0	0.0	10.9
EAFE Preliminary	1100.2	-0.1	9.2
Europe Preliminary	1537.5	0.1	9.5
Australia	1225.9	-1.1	7.4
Austria Preliminary	547.5	-0.1	9.9
Belgium Preliminary	1014.7	0.4	10.9
Canada Preliminary	2056.8	0.2	12.3
Denmark Preliminary	8182.4	0.4	10.5
Finland Preliminary	729.4	0.6	11.7
France Preliminary	1890.9	0.1	10.3
Germany Preliminary	917.5	0.3	8.7
Greece Preliminary	48.7	0.7	12.2
India	1261.7	-0.3	-0.1
Indonesia	7341.0	0.4	3.8
Ireland Preliminary	198.0	0.5	10.5
Israel Preliminary	255.0	-0.3	10.6
Italy Preliminary	692.2	0.1	11.3
Japan	967.5	-0.2	8.3
Korea	668.2	-0.4	10.6
Malaysia	596.8	-0.2	2.6
Netherlands Preliminary	1651.1	0.0	13.2
New Zealand	143.7	-0.1	8.3
Norway Preliminary	3014.1	0.2	8.2
Pakistan	395.0	-1.7	10.7
Philippines	1357.3	0.4	7.5
Portugal Preliminary	87.7	0.0	8.6
Singapore	1692.5	-0.4	6.2
Singapore Free	363.9	-0.4	6.2

Source: MSCI

THE STRAITS TIMES
DIGITAL STRATEGY COURSE

In an age of transformation, knowing "how to" is everything. In this one-day course, business owners and professionals will learn how to:

- Create awareness among potential customers about their business
- Create compelling digital content for your business and reach out to your audience on social media
- Decide on what to build: Web, app or both
- Give their business the best chance to succeed in today's e-marketplace
- Take preventive steps to protect their e-business from intrusion

Date: April 8
Time: 10am to 6pm (includes lunch and tea breaks)
Venue: Level 8 Tower Block SPH News Centre 1000 Toa Payoh North
Fee: $648 per participant

6319-5076
STmasterclass@sph.com.sg
Sign up now at stskills.sg

ST news with benefits
STskills
Strategic Partner Buuuk

THE TRAINERS

Azhar Kasman is the Editor of Stomp, SPH's award-winning citizen-journalism site, and also a Content Strategist for SPH's English, Malay, Tamil Media Group. Besides his editorial duties, Azhar explores new digital technologies and innovations for the newsroom and works closely with business clients to help them conceptualise and execute their digital content strategies.

Navjot Pawera is the director and head of design at Buuuk, a Singapore-based tech studio that has helped government and private organisations win international awards with their innovative digital solutions. He had previously worked with clients in India and Norway before working in Singapore.

THE STRAITS TIMES
WE'VE GOT SINGAPORE COVERED
Subscribe now at stsub.sg or call 6388-3838

OBITUARIES

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

TAN NANCY

Age: 71

passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019, leaving behind loved ones.

Father: Tan Ah Pee (Deceased)
Mother: Queh Mary (Deceased)

Brothers:
Tan Keh Hua
Tan Ke Tang
Tan Kah Soon
Tan Kay Lip

Spouses:
Rosy Ng
Pamela Loo
Patricia Leong

Sisters:
Lucy Tan
Carol Tan
Ivy Tan

Spouse:
Christopher Lim

Nephews:
Lydon Tan
Andre Tan
Daryl Tan
Derek Tan
Leonard Lim
Nicholas Lim

Nieces:
Jezamine Tan
Emily Tan

And all relatives.

Wake is held at Blk 638 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6 S'pore 560638. Cortege will leave on 2 March 2019 (Saturday) at 3.30pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 4.30pm.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalm 23

Tan Eg Yam

Age: 71

Passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones

Beloved Wife: Sin Ah Hiong

Children:
Gary Tan Eng Chin
Serene Tan Siao Wey

Children-in-law:
Ong Li Ping Joey
Abel Sim

Grandsons:
Jacob Ishvi Sim
Joash Ezra Sim

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 2, Regency Hall, 131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Memorial Service on Friday 1 March 2019 at 8.00pm.

Cortege will leave on Saturday 2 March 2019 at 11.30am for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 12.45pm.

Elizabeth Buay

nee Tan Soo Boon

was called home to be with the Lord
27 Feb 2019.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

Forever cherished and loved by her beloved
Husband David Buay Hong Kiat,
Children, Grandchildren and loving Family.

Thanksgiving Mass will be celebrated at St Vincent de Paul Church on 2nd March at 3.30pm. Thence to Mandai Crematorium, Hall 2 for final farewell at 5.15pm.

All flowers and donations to the St Vincent de Paul Society

---

*"Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household." **Acts 16:31***

Lim Pak Guan

Age: 91

Called home to be with the Lord on 26 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by all loved ones.

Wife: Ang Siew Eng (deceased)

Sons:
Lim Song Huat
Lim Song Chay
Lim Song Teh
Lim Song Hai

Daughters-in-law:
Rosalind Cheng
May Ng
Gina Ng

Daughters:
Lim Hoon Kheng
Lim Lee Kheng
Lim Hui Keng

Sons-in-law:
Paul E Besnia
Dick Hirayama

Grandchildren & Granddaughter-in-law:
Ken & Virginia, Jun, Naomi, Jolene, Jewel, Joel Champ, Mishael

Caregiver: Maria Lourdes Reyes Villanueva

And all relatives and friends.

Wake at Block 239 Lorong 1 Toa Payoh, Singapore 310239.

Night services on Friday and Saturday, 1 and 2 March 2019 at 8.00pm.

Funeral service on Sunday 3 March 2019 at 10.40am and thereafter cortege leaves for Choa Chua Kang Christian Cemetery for burial at 12.00pm.

Om Nama Shivaya

Mariappan Woonamalai
(Wife of Late KTM Staff)

Age: 94

Passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Sons:
Krishnan
Jaybalan
Gopal
Kunasegaran

Daughters-in-law:
Sakuntalai
Manimekalai
Letchimi
Pushpalatha

Daughters:
Jayaletchmi
Ratanam (deceased)
Susila

Sons-in-law:
A A Vasaant

George Stanislas (deceased)

In-laws, grandsons, granddaughters, all relatives and friends (Singapore and Malaysia).

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 5, Ruby Hall, 131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Cortege leaves on Thursday 28 February 2019 at 3.30pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 5.00pm.

**You made life an adventure,
No moment was dull around you,
You were wise and warm and full of love,
You left us too soon**

Sanjaya Rai

Age: 49

Passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Parents: Shri Prakash & Praveena Rai
Wife: Shalini
Sons: Nishant and Karan
Siblings & Spouses: Mugdha - Tony and Bhuwan - Swati
And all relatives and friends.

Sanju is resting at Block 89 Geylang Bahru Industrial Estate, #01-2734, Singapore 339697 from Thursday 28 February 2019, 10.00am onwards.

Cortege leaves on Thursday 28 February 2019 at 5.30pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 6.30pm.

Pavithran s/o Mahendran

Age: 21

Passed away peacefully on 26 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Father: A. Mahendran
Mother: N. Manimegalai
Paternal Grandmother: Jegathambal
Maternal Grandmother: Thuraisamy Parvathy
Brothers: M. Shasivarnan and M. Barath
Uncles / aunties and their spouses, cousins, all relatives and friends.

Pavi is resting at Block 327 Tah Ching Road #18-16, Singapore 610327. Tel: 9328 1955 / 9827 3629

Cortege leaves on Thursday 28 February 2019 at 5.00pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 6.30pm.

Wherever a beautiful soul has been, there is a trail of beautiful memories.

Anam Many

Age: 63

Was called home to the Lord on 27 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Daughters:
Rathi
Ananthi

Son-in-law:
Arnoud

Granddaughter:
Sophie

And all relatives and friends.

***Mother, you left us beautiful memories,
Your love is still our guide,
Although we cannot see you,
You're always at our side.***

Wake at Singapore Casket Level 3, Sapphire Hall, 131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.

Cortege leaves on Thursday 28 February 2019 at 3.15pm for cremation at Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 at 4.15pm.

"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalm 23:6

John Tan Lye Kiat

Age: 87

Was called home to be with the Lord on 27 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Rosalind Tan
Children & Spouses: Doreen & Michael, Kenneth & Pierre
Grandchildren: Keith and Kristy
And all relatives and friends.

Wake at Singapore Funeral Parlour Level 4, Lotus Room, 91 Tampines Link, Singapore 528746.

Night service on Friday 1 March 2019 at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Saturday 2 March 2019 at 3.15pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 4.15pm.

The family of the late

WONG LAN SANG

Departed on 23 February 2019

wish to express their heartfelt thanks and appreciation to relatives, friends, colleagues and business associates for their kind assistance, attendance, condolences, donations and wreaths during their recent bereavement.

With Deepest Sympathies
and Heartfelt Condolences
to the family of the late

Corporal (APF) Mahfudz Bin Merdit
who departed on 27 February 2019

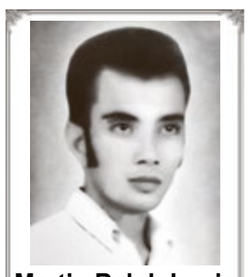
From the Management and Staff
of Certis CISCO Security Pte Ltd

CERTIS CISCO

With Deepest Sympathies
and Heartfelt Condolences
to the family of the late

Corporal (APF) Mahfudz Bin Merdit
who departed on 27 February 2019

From Commander and Staff
of Certis CISCO Auxiliary Police Force



Martin Ralph Louis

Age: 72

Was called home to be with the Lord on 27 February 2019, dearly missed and remembered by loved ones.

Wife:
Jessie Ng Sew Yang

Children:
Rudy Martin (deceased)
Andy Martin
Sodohoya Martin
Christopher Martin

Siblings, in-laws, grandchildren, nephews, nieces, all relatives and friends.

Wake at Block 620 Bedok Reservoir Road, Singapore 470620.

Night prayer on Thursday 28 February 2019 at 8.15pm.

Cortege leaves on Friday 1 March 2019 at 8.40am for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for service and cremation at 9.40am.

In Loving Memory Of

DR QUEK CHENG KIM
Departed 28 February 1981

Always remembered by Loved Ones

Share the message of farewell with loved ones & friends

Download the free ST Classifieds App.
Tap on "Obituaries" within the App.
You can search for notices published in the last 30 days and share it via email, SMS or social media.

Available on the App Store
Google play

STClassifieds

Find today's *obituaries* online

Death announcements in The Straits Times are now digitised to make it easier for the deceased's next-of-kin to share news of the demise of their loved one.
Find the online version of the obituaries published today at: **www.obits.sg/today** or **scan the QR code**.
To enquire about this service, please contact **+65 6319 5192**.

SPORT

No. 1

TOP-RANKED PLAYERS IN ALL FIVE BADMINTON EVENTS SLATED TO BE AT SINGAPORE OPEN **C7**

HSBC Women's World Championship 2019

ALL SET TO STRUT THEIR STUFF

Top women golfers talk up title hopes as they bid to tame Sentosa's tough Tanjong Course

Sazali Abdul Aziz

World No. 1 Ariya Jutanugarn feels pressure-free, defending champion Michelle Wie returns to the Sentosa Golf Club armed with a new skill, and third-ranked Minjee Lee says she's hitting "pretty solid".

The world's top women golfers are raring to display their "A" game when the HSBC Women's World Championship starts today at the Sentosa Golf Club's New Tanjong Course.

"I did learn how to become ambidextrous in the off-season," the American Wie told the media. "I can use chopsticks with my left hand. That's a nice little party trick."

Wie's latest talent isn't just for kicks, though. It is a result of her undergoing surgery in the off-season, stemming from a fracture of her dominant right hand in a car accident two years ago.

A win in Singapore last year was her fifth LPGA Tour win – her first for four years – and the former child prodigy is convinced she is healthy again. She's certainly happy, too.

"I just try to make lists every day of what I'm grateful for, especially because the last couple of years have been pretty tough," added the 29-year-old, who finished tied for 23rd in her first start of the year at the LPGA Thailand in Chonburi last week.

"Like this week, I'm just grateful that I'm here. I'm trying to soak in everything. Just trying to keep the good vibes going.

"It's definitely a different experience coming back as defending champion.

"It's really cool (and) really awesome to see my picture everywhere."

Indeed, the HSBC Women's World Championship – the fifth LPGA tournament of the year and the final stop in the Tour's four-week swing through Australia and Asia – presents an opportunity for the world's top players to set the tone for the year.

Top-ranked Ariya leads the star-studded 63-strong field, which includes the likes of world No. 2 Park Sung-hyunand former world No. 1 Lydia Ko of New Zealand.

World No. 5 Park In-bee, a seven-time Major champion and a two-time winner of the HSBC event (2015 and 2017), will make her season debut.

The winner of the US$1.5 million (S$2.02 million) tournament will take home US$225,000.

Australia's world No. 3 Lee said the tournament presents "a great test of golf" and she hopes to carry her momentum from Thailand where she finished runner-up to South Korean Amy Yang last week.

A win here will also boost her chances of claiming the top ranking.

The 23-year-old added: "It's at the back of my mind, but I have more statistical goals that I would like to meet and, in meeting those, I think that will eventually get me to world No. 1.

"So I don't really think like, 'Oh, my God, I have to get to world No. 1 like next week'.

"I think that's too much pressure on myself. So I just like to take every week as it comes and try and do my best."

American world No. 8 Nelly Korda believes the challenging course – the tournament was moved to the par-72, 6,718-yard New Tanjong Course only in 2017 – and the rigours of travel will result in few low scores.

"It's playing a lot longer this year. The greens are pretty firm so you're going to have longer putts for birdies," said the 20-year-old, who is the daughter of retired tennis star and 1988 Australian Open champion Petr Korda.

"From what I see, I don't think the scores are going to be so low."

Inevitably, all eyes will be on top-ranked Ariya, who swept almost every major honour on the LPGA Tour last season.

The 23-year-old shrugged off the media scrutiny as she hopes to build on the joint-14th finish in her home tournament last week.

She said: "I feel good after last week because I feel like right now I have no pressure (on me).

"I struggled (the last two weeks) because I was so nervous, and lots of people expected me to play well.

"But, last week, I played a lot better. This week, I feel a lot more comfortable and I feel like there's no pressure any more."

msazali@sph.com.sg

Australian world No. 3 Minjee Lee is looking for another good result to boost her bid for the top spot after her second-placed finish in the LPGA Thailand event last week. Also in the fray are world No. 1 Ariya Jutanugarn of Thailand and South Korean world No. 2 Park Sung-hyun. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

1ST ROUND: SELECTED TEE TIMES

1ST HOLE

8.41am: Michelle Wie, Lindy Duncan, Jodi Ewart Shadoff

9.25am: Danielle Kang, Moriya Jutanugarn, Amy Yang

9.36am: Lydia Ko, Kim Sei-young, Feng Shanshan

9.47am: Georgia Hall, Carlota Ciganda, Ko Jin-young

9.58am: Brooke Henderson, Nasa Hataoka, Nelly Korda

10.09am: Ryu So-yeon, Park In-bee, Lexi Thompson

10.20am: Minjee Lee, Park Sung-hyun, Ariya Jutanugarn

10TH HOLE

8.57am: Gerina Piller, Bronte Law, Cristie Kerr

9.30am: Pernilla Lindberg, Annie Park, Angela Stanford

9.52am: Jennifer Song, Austin Ernst, Amanda Tan (Sgp)

Less is more for re-energised Ryu

Xener Gill

Ryu So-yeon is 28 years old, wears an easy smile, is the fourth-best female golfer on the planet and, like everyone else on the LPGA Tour, has only one ambition: to get better.

As the season gets into gear, Ryu is trying to work on various aspects of her game and one of them is to simply enjoy the game a little more.

The South Korean former world No. 1 is well known for her consistency but last season "it actually gave me a lot of pressure".

People, she said, expected her to finish in the top 10 all the time and it was stressful.

The result, she added, was that even if she finished "tied for 11th or 12th, I just give myself a really, really hard time".

But now, Ryu said, she is trying to alter her outlook.

"I'm really trying to focus on my performance instead of the result and that (helps me) enjoy the game a little more.

"I think that's one of the biggest (things) I've learnt last year, so hopefully, I can have this positive mind all the way through my career."

The HSBC Women's World Championship this week is only her second event of the year after last week's LPGA Thailand as she embarks on a less hectic season.

Ryu played 23 events last season but the result, she admitted, was that she felt "sort of burnt out".

It is hard for a player to have fun when they are tired and Ryu thought, "maybe I'm going to cut down a little bit of tournaments, so I'm going to play a little less".

She took a long break and it energised her.

"I could not wait to just get back on the road and I could not wait to compete, and then I realised, you know, I love it. I really love this game."

While the South Korean said her short game has been upgraded, her entire game was still not perfectly tuned. Part of the reason was her winter training in Dallas.

"I always try to feel every single muscle when I'm swinging. I really love to focus on how my muscles are moving... but I couldn't really feel it because it was so cold. So I think because of that, my timing is a little off," she said.

After the warm conditions in Thailand, the two-time Major champion is looking forward to a more productive tournament this weekend.

"I'm still going to do my best and, hopefully, my game is going to be better and better and, by Sunday, I'm good enough to hold the trophy."

xenerg@sph.com.sg

Two-time Major champion Ryu So-yeon will be playing "a little less" this season in order to focus on her performance and simply enjoy the game she loves. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

OutsideTheRopes

Michelle Wie

Q&A

Q *What is the best shot you have ever hit?*
A The putt I made here last year is one of the top ones for sure. (She sank a 45-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole to win the 2018 HSBC Women's World Championship at Sentosa Golf Club).

Q *Who is an athlete you admire and why?*
A Kobe Bryant. His grit and mentality throughout the game inspire me.

Q *Do you have any superstitions?*
A I never wear pink on Fridays.

Q *What drives you crazy about golf?*
A Slow play.

Q *What is the thing you love most about golf?*
A Just being outside and playing golf, especially when you play with your friends, it's so much fun.

Laura Chia

Published and printed by Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Co. Regn. No. 198402868E.

A member of Audit Bureau of Circulations Singapore. Customer Service (Circulation): 6388-3838, circs@sph.com.sg, Fax 6746-1925.

HSBC Women's World Championship 2019

ASIA MUST WAIT FOR FIRST MAJOR

LPGA commissioner Michael Whan is pleased with the growing number of young girls playing golf around the world. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

LPGA chief Whan cites history and financial commitments as factors behind host status

David Lee

With the heavy presence of Asian players on the LPGA Tour and the growing number of tournaments in the region, Thailand's world No. 1 Ariya Jutanugarn feels that it's time for Asia to have its own Major.

There's also the small fact that eight of the 13 female golfers who have been crowned No. 1 since the world rankings were introduced in 2006 are Asians.

But, Michelle Wie, the defending champion of this week's HSBC Women's World Championship, disagrees with Ariya as adding a sixth Major would "diminish the royalty of having a Major".

Currently, there are five Majors in the women's game – the ANA Inspiration, the US Women's Open, Women's PGA Championship, the Women's British Open and The Evian Championship, which became the fifth Major in 2013.

LPGA commissioner Michael Whan did not rule out the possibility of having a Major in Asia one day, but cited the key factors that have to be taken into consideration.

He drew a comparison between some of the Asian events, like the HSBC Women's World Championship which has seen multiple short-term extensions since its inception in 2008, with some of the Majors.

The 53-year-old told The Straits Times: "There's certainly the ability to hold a Major in Asia, but we just don't have a Major availability, at least on my schedule. I can give you a list of six or seven tournaments that have proven they are capable of taking it up that notch.

"But it is a monster financial commitment. Majors have significant long-term agreements. They are not three- and five-year deals...

"Evian was a regular tournament for 19 years before they became a Major... it had a 30-year plan.

"Majors have roots, they have to be with you for 30, 40, 50 years. First, I have to have someone in Asia to tell me they have a 30-year vision and a 30-year plan and I have to have a Major to give them. I currently have neither of those two things."

Whan, however, assured that the LPGA will continue with its global outreach despite the lack of an official Major in Asia.

When he took over the LPGA in 2010, the Tour had just 24 events amid the economic downturn. This year, there will be 33 events with a combined prize purse of US$70.55 million (S$95.1 million), up from US$65.35 million last year.

In the past decade, the LPGA Tour has expanded its reach from 190 hours of television time a year in 25 countries to 500 hours in 175 countries.

In a bid to make the LPGA Tour a global product, Whan and his team studied and took the lead from the National Basketball Association, the English Premier League and the Olympics.

LONG HISTORY

Majors are roots, they have to be with you for 30, 40, 50 years... I have to have someone in Asia to tell me they have a 30-year vision.

MICHAEL WHAN, LPGA boss, outlining the long runway a Major requires.

"The Olympics build this form where the best in the world are striving to get to, no matter where they come from. And, when they get there, the Olympics really celebrate the fact that they come from all over the world," he said.

"Yet, the Olympics really feel like a hometown event, and they let the world eavesdrop. They don't make it about the world, they make it about the hometown.

"When we are in Singapore, we have to embrace Singapore and let the rest of the world eavesdrop on Singapore.

"A lot of sports miss that, they really want to be global but they didn't want to be local. We try to be local and show the rest of the world these markets."

And Whan is not resting on his laurels as he introduced three new formats in this year's line-up.

The season-opening Diamond Resorts Tournament of Champions in Florida last month featured celebrities competing alongside winners from the past two seasons, while the Vic Open earlier this month saw 156 men and 156 women playing for equal but separate prize money in Australia.

There is also The Dow Great Lakes Bay Invitational in July, a 72-hole two-player team competition in Michigan.

Whan said: "Events and prize money and TV are the stuff that the media write about and what I hear on talk shows. I get it, but I feel like that is the result of the more important stuff.

"The real difference is how many young girls are playing this game. We started going to Malaysia and you didn't see women playing golf at the LPGA level. Now, 80 per cent of the gallery is women, and the same for Thailand.

"When I joined in 2010, youth golf in the US looked just like adult golf – 15 per cent girls, 85 per cent boys. Today, youth golf is 33 per cent girls and it will be 50-50 in the next 10 years.

"The most important thing is we are changing the number of girls who play the game and that is going to change the face of this game worldwide. It was never going to be a great sport if it were a male-only sport. And that has really changed in the last 10 years."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

Home United's Adam Swandi attempting a shot at goal during the AFC Cup Group H match against Indonesian side PSM Makassar at the Jalan Besar Stadium yesterday. The match ended 1-1 and Home will play Kaya FC in the Philippines next. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

Impressive Hami rescues a point for Home

Wang Meng Meng

He is the new recruit among a strong cast of experienced internationals and league veterans.

But, for the second game in four days, young Hami Syahin stood out for Home United with another bright display.

Playing in a new deep-lying midfield role, the 20-year-old rescued a point for the Protectors in a 1-1 draw with Indonesian side PSM Makassar in their opening Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Cup Group H match at Jalan Besar Stadium last night.

"Coach (Saswadimata Dasuki) has always told me that whenever I find space, I should always take a shot," said Hami, who was named the Man of the Match. "That's why I took the chance when I saw it."

Home made a positive start before 1,589 fans, but fell behind when Makassar's Finnish forward Eero Markkanen scored with a left-footed volley in the 26th minute.

The Singapore Premier League club, who missed their injured foreign midfielders Song Ui-young (South Korea) and Isaka Cernak (Australia), then found themselves pinned down by the playmaking of Makassar's Dutch midfielder Willem Pluim.

But, in the 63rd minute, Hami decided to have a crack from 25 metres out and the ball smashed past Makassar goalkeeper Rivky Mokodompit into the top corner.

His goal drew praise from Makassar's Bosnian coach Darije Kalezic, who said: "They scored a goal that you could see only in the top competitions.

"We controlled the game, 100 per cent. We created enough chances to win the game, but didn't kill the game. But we have to be satisfied with one away point."

Hami, who joined Home from the Young Lions this season, also starred in last Saturday's Community Shield win over Albirex Niigata, bossing the midfield and scoring the decisive penalty in the shoot-out.

Saswadimata said: "He's got good vision, his technique is very strong.

"He can control the midfield with Izzdin (Shafiq). They have combined well together and I've told him to work really hard and he should have the ambition to go further."

Home are hoping to replicate last season's success when they won the Asean Zone final of the continent's second-tier club tournament before losing to North Korea's April 25 in the inter-zone play-off semi-finals.

Home's next fixture is on March 13, away to Philippine side Kaya FC, who drew 1-1 with Lao Toyota of Laos in the other group match.

meng@sph.com.sg

SportsWorld

Ramos faces longer ban for calculated act

MADRID • Uefa has charged Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos with "receiving a yellow card on purpose" in the first leg of the club's Champions League last-16 tie against Ajax Amsterdam earlier this month.

The European football's governing body launched a probe after the Spain defender, who is already suspended from next Tuesday's return leg, told reporters he "forced (the booking)".

If a player is found to have obtained a booking deliberately, he can be banned for two games. Ramos' case will be heard today. REUTERS

Fury to put Wilder rematch on hold

LOS ANGELES • Tyson Fury has informed the World Boxing Council he plans to fight an as-yet-unnamed opponent before any rematch with reigning heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder, the WBC said on Tuesday.

The WBC tweeted it had been notified by Fury's camp that the British fighter was planning another bout before climbing back into the ring with Wilder.

Wilder and Fury fought to a draw in Los Angeles in December after an epic 12-round battle at the Staples Centre and their rematch is likely to be one of the most anticipated fights of the year. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Sancho move under probe for inducement

LONDON • Allegations that Manchester City paid Jadon Sancho's agent £200,000 (S$359,000) in connection with the England forward's move from Watford when he was 14 are to be investigated by the Football Association.

Leaked documents published by the German news weekly Der Spiegel appear to show that City tried to conceal the payment by giving Sancho's agent, Emeka Obasi, a scouting contract to find players in Central and South America.

City may also be in breach of rules banning incentives or inducements for players under 16. THE TIMES, LONDON

Fines to be doled out to cyclists who litter

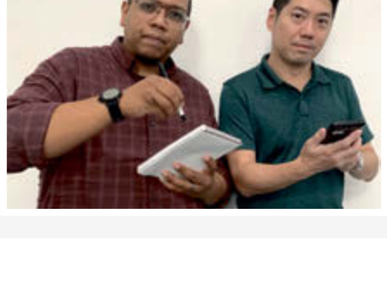
PARIS • Riders caught throwing away empty bidons at this weekend's opening World Tour race could face fines of up to 1,000 Swiss francs (S$1,352) after new anti-littering rules brought in by UCI, cycling's world governing body.

Bidons, or water bottles, flying into roadside hedges are a common sight in professional cycling and, while many are fetched by fans as souvenirs, the UCI is cracking down on the practice.

UCI jury commissioner Philippe Marien told Belgian newspaper Het Nieuwsblad it was no longer acceptable in this day and age. REUTERS

A Game of Two Halves

ST correspondents Sazali Abdul Aziz and Wang Meng Meng discuss football, basketball, the triathlon, athletics and mixed martial arts action in Singapore over the weekend: http://str.sg/oaMX



STwine our best picks

Don't settle. Drink only great wines!

www.STwine.sg

LOTTERY

TOTO Thu, 28 Feb 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3453/2019

Group 1 Prize $2,400,000 est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

SINGAPORE SWEEP Wed, 6 Mar 2019, 6.30pm Draw No.1007

First Prize $2,300,000

9 sets of 2D winning numbers (315,000 prizes, each $6)

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.
LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above)
Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)
SB: SportsBuzz@Kranji (21 years and above)
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6786 6688 for more details.

PLAY RESPONSIBLY
Stay Legal. Bet With Cans. | National Problem Gambling Helpline: 1800-6-668-668

RCB Reg No.: 196800202G

FOUR-DIGIT DRAW

Feb 27 2019

FIRST ◆ 4945
SECOND ◆ 6031
THIRD ◆ 5462

STARTERS
0291 4249 5475
6404 7421 8121
8339 9385 9562
9849

CONSOLATIONS
0081 1125 3442
3820 6176 6429
6923 7033 8021
9563

TAKE LEAP ABROAD, BUT WITH EYES OPEN

Know your contract and have back-up plans, say Lions who had issues with foreign clubs

David Lee

A winger with a nose for goals, Singapore international Faris Ramli smelled a rat when he signed a one-year deal with Malaysian Premier League (MPL) club Perlis, worth more than US$100,000 (S$136,000), last month.

He was promised an apartment, but had to put up in a hotel in Kuala Lumpur, pay the bill of a few hundred ringgits himself, and wait for reimbursement.

It sounded off alarm bells for the 26-year-old, who also heard that 27 Perlis players were not paid by the Perlis Football Association's previous management last year.

With his agent Effendi Jagan's help, Faris managed to negotiate a mutual termination of the contract without compensation from either party, and subsequently signed with Singapore Premier League (SPL) side Hougang United.

"There were some issues with the contract that I did not know when I signed," said Faris, whose agent Effendi was not present at the signing.

"This is why it is very important to have an experienced and trusted agent with you during negotiations and signing because they would know more than the players, some of whom may be joining an overseas team for the first time," added the wiry forward, who featured for Malaysian Super League (MSL) team PKNS FC last season.

Faris was not the only Lion caught in a fix in recent years as local footballers try their luck overseas in a bid to play in more competitive leagues for better pay.

In 2015, forward Fazrul Nawaz was sacked by MPL side Sabah just weeks after rushing to join them on deadline day. Sabah claimed the player went missing, but Fazrul was able to show text messages with the management to show they were in contact and knew his whereabouts.

In 2017, utility player Hafiz Sujad found himself without a club when Big Bang Chula United pulled out of Thailand's second-tier league without warning, less than halfway through the season.

Defender Madhu Mohana was released by then MSL team Negeri Sembilan during pre-season last year for a supposedly long-term injury even though a second opinion from another doctor stated otherwise.

Both Fazrul and Madhu received their compensation from their respective clubs only months later.

Fazrul told ST: "Once you go overseas, it can be difficult to find people you can trust.

"The reality is, if they no longer want you, they can find any excuse to get rid of you.

"I think it is important in 50-50 situations to have a back-up plan if it is possible, to have an understanding with a local club, even if your ambition is still to play overseas."

Former national defender and former agent R. Sasikumar bemoaned the unprofessional management and clueless middlemen that continue to plague football in this region.

He said: "Instead of improving, it seems to have been more rampant. Some teams like to 'chope' (colloquial term for secure) an import first and then regret when there is a better option, so they try all means to offload the earlier signings.

"Affected players who are wrongfully dismissed can make a report with the players' status committees of their respective home and away football associations, and they can also go all the way up to the Asian Football Confederation or even (world governing body) Fifa, although such a process may be long drawn."

Sasi also suggested that the Football Association of Singapore (FAS), or the SPL, could help improve local footballers' knowledge regarding such matters by conducting voluntary workshops.

He added: "Players should be educated about what goes into a standard contract so that they have a sense if things are not right. Certain clauses, such as the termination clause, are very important, and they should know about things like not leaving the dates blank.

"It's not 100 per cent foolproof, but at least the basic framework is there and they know what to look out for and what to ask their prospective clubs.

"Other than that, it is important to have a good agent and be street smart.

"If teams are serious about signing the player, they will give him reasonable time to go through the contract so that there will be no trouble for both parties down the road."

The FAS is in discussions with Fifa regarding the establishment of a system for intermediaries to register themselves with the association.

An FAS spokesman said: "The system will assist in licensing player agents and building a database of FAS-recognised intermediaries.

"In addition, the FAS Players' Status Committee will consider all matters relating to the status and registration of players, and oversee policy in relation to International Transfer Certificate procedures in accordance to Fifa regulations.

"The committee will also assist in educating players in relation to their contracts with foreign teams and more details will be shared in due course."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

Faris Ramli sealed a deal with SPL side Hougang just weeks after the mutual termination of his contract with Perlis. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/HOUGANG UNITED

Jackpot funds need strict checks: MHA

Sazali Abdul Aziz

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has reminded Singapore Premier League (SPL) clubs holding permits to operate jackpot machines to remain vigilant in their operations.

This comes after The Straits Times reported on Monday that a female employee from Hougang United – one of six SPL clubs running such operations – had been charged in court for allegedly misappropriating $278,200 from their clubhouse operations.

In response to ST's queries, an MHA spokesman said: "Following the fund misappropriation case at Hougang United Football Club, MHA has reminded all permit holders to be vigilant in their overall governance, processes and procedures, including maintaining accountability and checks and balances in their financial matters."

To operate fruit machines, clubs need to be granted a permit under the Private Lotteries Act, which is to be renewed annually provided a host of conditions are met.

One such condition is that clubs are required to open and maintain a separate bank account for jackpot revenue and maintain proper accounting records in that account.

Others include applying social safeguards, such as not allowing anyone under the age of 21 to enter the fruit-machine room, and installing closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras to provide continuous recording of activities in the room.

Permits issued to clubs may be revoked if there are breaches of any of these conditions.

Presently, six of nine SPL clubs – Hougang, Albirex Niigata, Balestier Khalsa, Geylang International, Home United and Warriors FC – run jackpot operations at their respective clubhouses.

Depending on the size of their clubhouse operations, they can hold a few hundred thousand dollars in cash for winner payouts.

Clubs ST spoke to said that, in addition to applying MHA guidelines, they also have stringent standard operating procedures to prevent the misappropriation of cash, or detect it if it happens.

Home, who run 23 machines at their clubhouse at the Bishan Sports Hall, conduct regular audits and surprise checks on employees.

Said a club spokesman: "We have in place a stringent system of checks and balances such as two-factor authentication, segregation of duties and daily report requirement for cash management.

"These initiatives are complemented by regular audits as well as surprise checks conducted."

Balestier, who operate eight jackpot machines at the Toa Payoh Stadium next to the club's administration office, keep a comparatively small sum of cash for payouts.

"The cashier's safe has a maximum of only $10,000 for daily operations," said club chairman S. Thavaneson.

"If there is a request by the cashier for additional cash as a result of large payouts, the club general manger will issue additional cash after verifying the payouts during the day."

"All cash balances, payouts, cash book are checked and reconciled at the end of each working day by the general manager," he added.

"Any discrepancy is immediately investigated and either corrected or reported to management for further action."

ST had reported that Malaysian Tean Tai Tee, the Hougang employee who was arrested and charged in court with one count of criminal breach of trust for having allegedly misappropriated $278,200, can be jailed for up to 15 years, and fined if convicted.

msazali@sph.com.sg

6 of 9

Singapore Premier League clubs running jackpot operations at their clubhouses.

Rodgers predicts 'special things on the horizon' for Foxes

LONDON • With the Claude Puel cloud lifted, here comes Brendan Rodgers' reign.

Leicester's new manager ran the rule over his charges from the directors' box on Tuesday as they claimed their first home win since Boxing Day, thanks to goals by Demarai Gray and Jamie Vardy.

Rodgers, whose appointment was confirmed just before kick-off, was given a rapturous greeting from the fans and the reception was understandable after the restraint of Puel's 16-month tenure at the King Power Stadium.

While Davy Propper pulled one back, it was not enough for relegation-threatened Brighton as they slumped to a 2-1 Premier League defeat.

However, the night was all about Rodgers, who indicated he would bring the charisma and people skills that Leicester need.

The former Liverpool boss, back in England after three years in Scotland with Celtic, made all the right noises, promising to "give his life to make the supporters proud of their club".

He added: "It feels great, it has obviously come very quickly over the last few days, but I know I'm joining a fantastic club that has grown so quickly over these last few years.

"It's a young squad, a very dynamic squad, it's got huge potential and you've also got some of the players with good experience.

"There were a number of factors in being here and, like I say, I'm absolutely delighted.

"When the opportunity came to talk to Leicester and I was able to analyse it, it allowed me to think that I had probably achieved and taken the club at Celtic maybe as far as I could at this moment."

Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha, Leicester's vice-chairman, said: "I'm absolutely delighted to bring a manager of Brendan's calibre to Leicester and I look forward to seeing what he, our talented, young squad and our dedicated, skilled team of staff can achieve together."

Leicester striker Jamie Vardy getting the better of Brighton defender Shane Duffy to score his team's second goal in the 2-1 Premier League win at the King Power Stadium on Tuesday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

First-team coach Mike Stowell, who took charge of the Brighton encounter, told reporters Rodgers had spoken to the players in the dressing room and predicted "there are special things on the horizon".

He said: "He was proud of them and liked the spirit. The atmosphere has lifted with a win and, with the new manager, I'm sure he'll bring a lot of good things and he's got a lot of staff with him. It's exciting times."

One of the new faces will be former Arsenal, Manchester City and Liverpool defender Kolo Toure, who will join the backroom staff as a first-team coach.

The Ivorian played and worked for the 46-year-old at Anfield and Parkhead, and Rodgers is also expected to raid Celtic for several of their key players. REUTERS, THE GUARDIAN, THE TIMES, LONDON

SPORT

INDONESIANS ROUND UP S'PORE OPEN LINE-UP

Marcus Gideon (left) and Kevin Sukamuljo will spearhead Indonesia's challenge in the men's doubles at the Singapore Open. The Indonesian contingent will also include Anthony Ginting and Jonatan Christie. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ticket sales rise as April 9-14 competition to feature world No. 1 players from all 5 events

Nicole Chia

With men's doubles pair Marcus Gideon and Kevin Sukamuljo confirming their participation in the Singapore Badminton Open, the April 9-14 tournament will see the world No. 1 players of all five events competing at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Organisers announced yesterday that the pair, the Asian Games champions, are part of a 50-strong contingent from Indonesia who will be in town.

The contingent includes men's singles world No. 7 Anthony Ginting and No. 9 Jonatan Christie, also an Asian Games champion.

The other top-ranked players are Kento Momota of Japan (men's singles), Tai Tzu-ying of Chinese Taipei (women's singles), Japanese pair Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota (women's doubles) and Chinese duo Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong (mixed doubles).

The Singapore Open's star-studded field will also feature China's top male shuttlers Lin Dan and Chen Long and Denmark's Viktor Axelsen, the men's singles world No. 6.

Singapore's representatives include Loh Kean Yew in the men's singles and Yeo Jia Min in the women's singles.

Loh, who upset two-time Olympic champion Lin to win the Thailand Masters last month, said: "As a player and a fan of the sport, I'm excited that so many big names are going to be competing at the Singapore Open.

"This is going to be a huge test for myself and I hope to capitalise on the home support to push me to achieve great results and do Singapore proud."

The constellation of stars has resulted in an uptick in ticket sales, according to the organisers.

"We are heartened to see that ticket sales have increased 30 per cent against last year's week-on-week. This speaks volume of the growing support for badminton in Singapore," said Michael Foo, spokesman of the organising committee.

"Within the last two weeks, the ticket sales tripled since we announced the return of Lin Dan after a two-year absence and reigning world champion Kento Momota.

"Also, our local shuttler Loh Kean Yew's historic win against Lin Dan in Thailand earlier in the year brought about great public and media interest to badminton.

"This stellar line-up is definitely something badminton aficionados would not want to miss."

cnicole@sph.com.sg

• Early-bird sales end today before midnight, and are available on Sports Hub Tix and ApacTix

Poor defence let the Celtics down: Coach

Toronto Raptors forward Kawhi Leonard trying to block a shot by Boston Celtics guard Marcus Smart at the Scotiabank Arena on Tuesday night. The Raptors won the National Basketball Association game 118-95 to record their eight straight home victory over the Celtics. PHOTO: REUTERS

TORONTO • It was a case of the "same old, same old" on Tuesday night at the Scotiabank Arena.

Going into their match-up, the Toronto Raptors had won their past seven games against the Boston Celtics at home, and there was never any doubt that domination would continue with Nick Nurse's players leading by as many as 31 points during the third quarter.

The hosts coasted to a 118-95 National Basketball Association win over the visitors, extending their impressive home record to 26-6 this season and 45-17 overall, while condemning Brad Stevens' team (37-24) to their third straight loss and fifth in their last seven games.

Afterwards, the Boston coach did not mince his words, blaming the defeat on his team being "all over the place defensively".

Stevens said: "Obviously, we struggled to score in stretches. And, when I say all over the place, we were really taking a lot of shortcuts defensively.

"You can't do that against any team and, certainly tonight, they exposed us and played great. I thought we were just outplayed every way."

Admitting they "just weren't together", Celtics guard Marcus Smart, who had five points, told reporters: "I'm sure we're going to figure it out. But, right now, it's slower than expected."

While Boston struggled at both ends of the court, with Kyrie Irving in particular having an uncharacteristically off-key night after scoring only seven points, Toronto were able to ride on a 21-point performance from Kawhi Leonard.

Nurse felt the Raptors forward "had a little bit different gear in him", telling Yahoo Sports: "He was just a little bit more relaxed in general, but was still assertive, if that makes any sense.

"He was just going to take it where he wanted to take it tonight, and no one was going to do anything about it."

Pascal Siakam led all scorers with 25 points and Nurse praised how his big-name players had taken the 24-year-old Cameroon forward, who tied a career-high with four three-pointers, under their wing to improve his game.

He told Yahoo: "I give Kyle (Lowry) and Kawhi (a lot of credit). Those guys accepted a young guy coming in here, and scoring a lot of buckets and they love him.

"There's no ill will. You know they're trying to give him more (of the ball), get him more opportunities. It's pretty cool." AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Yu wins STTA top award

Asian Games joint-bronze medallist Yu Mengyu was named the Singapore Table Tennis Association's (STTA) Player of the Year 2018 at its annual awards night yesterday. The 29-year-old overcame injury to win Singapore's only table tennis medal in the 2018 Asian Games women's singles competition. Koen Pang (right), 16, was the STTA Youth Player of the Year while Izaac Quek received the STTA Hopes Player of the Year award for paddlers aged 12 and below.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

GOLF
Asian Tour New Zealand Open: Day 1 (StarHub Ch204, 9am).
European Tour Oman Open: Day 1 (Ch204, 2.30pm & 6pm).
LPGA Tour HSBC Women's World Championship: Day 1 (Sentosa Golf Club, New Tanjong Course, 8.30am. Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 10am).

TENNIS
ATP Dubai Championships: Day 4 (StarHub Ch201, 7pm).
ATP Mexican Open: Day 4 (Ch201, tomorrow, 7am).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL
Spanish LaLiga Rayo v Girona (StarHub Ch213, Saturday, 3.55am).

GOLF
Asian Tour New Zealand Open: Day 2 (StarHub Ch204, 9am).
European Tour Oman Open: Day 2 (Ch204, 2.30pm & 6pm).
LPGA Tour HSBC Women's World Championship: Day 2 (Sentosa Golf Club, New Tanjong Course, 8.30am. Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 10am).

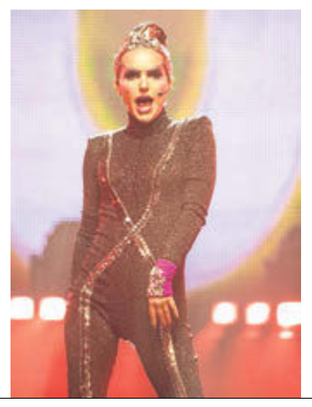
RUGBY
World Sevens Series Las Vegas Matches 1-16 (StarHub Ch202, Saturday, 7am).

TENNIS
ATP Dubai Championships: Day 5 (StarHub Ch201, 9pm).
ATP Mexican Open: Day 5 (Ch201, Saturday, 8am).

For latest updates, go to singteltv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D
TROUBLED POP STAR
Natalie Portman in Vox Lux
D3



NOW IN TOKYO
Starbucks' largest store in the world
D18

(From left) Keyboard player Lu Heng is the music director of yIN Harmony, an ethnic music group that crosses cultures and was started by Tan Qing Lun, who plays the Indian flute. Other musicians who go beyond cultures are Parveen Kaur, who plays the pipa; Mohamed Faizal Mohamed Salim, who plays the guzheng; Amritha Devaraj, who sings xinyao; and Benjamin Boo, who plays the Indian drum mridangam. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Sounds of Singapore

A growing number of music enthusiasts and musicians are studying traditional music across cultures

Akshita Nanda
Arts Correspondent

Fifteen-year-old Amritha Devaraj is a prize-winning singer of traditional Indian Carnatic music – and also xinyao, the Mandarin folk song movement unique to Singapore.

Last year, the Crescent Girls' School student and her schoolmate Bao Rui Ming came in third in the singing (group) category at the National Schools Xinyao Singing and Songwriting Competition. They sang Rang Ye Qing Qing Luo Xia (As The Night Falls Gently) in front of a panel of judges, who included the work's original singer, Pan Ying.

Amritha has studied Chinese since Primary 1 and likes xinyao because of the lyrics. "It is a special music genre of Singapore," she says. "I don't think it should be lost."

More music lovers like her – amateurs and professionals – are devoting their time to studying music across cultures.

At the 2017 National Indian Music Competition, a triennial contest organised by the National Arts Council (NAC), Amritha placed second in the Carnatic Vocal intermediate section.

Among the 43 who received prizes or honourable mentions were three Chinese contestants, including the Singapore Chinese Orchestra's (SCO) newest member, percussionist Benjamin Boo. He won third prize for playing the Indian drum in the mridangam open category.

The 2014 edition of the same competition saw flautist Tan Qing Lun win second place in the open category for Indian flute. No first or third prizes were awarded.

At the biennial National Chinese Music Competition (NCMC) last October, two young sheng players, Krishiv Pappu and Rohan Nanduri, now 12, received third prize and an honourable mention respectively.

Fourteen-year-old Parveen Kaur also took first prize in the pipa youth category – she started learning the instrument at the urging of her Chinese mother.

Ms Elaine Ng, NAC's senior director of sector development for performing arts, says: "NCMC 2018 had more non-Chinese participants compared with the 2016 edition. However, the number of participants vary with each edition, depending on who decides to take part."

There is no such competition for Malay music, but musicians and educators report that more non-Malays seem to be interested in learning Malay instruments.

Percussion group Nadi Singapura has Chinese fans who sign up to perform with the group during the Chingay parade, for example.

Also popular is the angklung, a bamboo instrument from Indonesia that took off in Singapore in the 1970s.

Pioneering angklung conductor Faridah Jamal, 57, has led music ensembles in schools since 1983 and says there are now more Chinese students wanting to learn the instrument. "Last time, it was challenging to get non-Malay students. Now, the younger generation's minds are open. There is this interest in other people's cultures."

She adds: "I want to attract Malay students, of course, but if the group is 99 per cent Malay, then there's something wrong. That is not Singapore."

Key to this cross-cultural interest is the tone set by music teachers – that traditional music is for all Singaporeans, not just for students from one background.

The environment for cross-cultural music learning has not always been so welcoming.

When musician Mohamed Faizal Mohamed Salim started learning the erhu and guzheng 20 years ago in his school's Chinese orchestra, he was an anomaly. The instructor spoke only Mandarin.

"I had to ask my friend what the teacher was saying. I picked up many of the techniques visually," recalls the 38-year-old, who is now a full-time solo guzheng player.

It is a different story these days.

Last year's NCMC winners, Krishiv and Rohan, who both attend Elias Park Primary School, started learning the sheng in their school orchestra.

Pupils Krishiv Pappu (left) and Rohan Nanduri have won prizes for playing the sheng, a traditional Chinese wind instrument. ST PHOTOS: JASMINE CHOONG

Rohan says: "I joined because I saw my friends playing in the orchestra and the instrument looked nice."

SCO percussionist Boo, 30, took up the Indian mridangam because his bachelor of music degree at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Nafa) required him to study more than Western instruments.

"No one was picking South Indian music and I wanted to be the first," he says. "I fell in love with the mridangam because a lot of the musical language resembles the Chinese percussion language."

Tan, his former schoolmate at Nafa, is doing his doctorate in the dizi at Beijing's China Conservatory of Music and started studying the Indian flute with Singaporean flautist Ghanavenothan Retnam in 2009.

He now insists that his dizi students also try the Indian flute and has set up yIN Harmony, an ethnic music group that aims to reflect Singapore's multicultural identity through unique repertoire.

"That's what I believe in. This is what's happening in Singapore," he says.

Cross-cultural exchanges are indeed a key feature of Singapore's music eco-system, notes Mr Terence Ho, SCO's executive director and vice-president of the Singapore Chinese Music Federation.

The orchestra has collaborated with musicians from various traditions, including tabla player Jatinder Singh Bedi and Malay percussionists from Orkestra Sri Temasek.

Mr Ho has also observed more musicians like Tan who "cross boundaries" and create new repertoire through their exposure to different traditions. "These are the virtuosos of Singapore," he says. "This repertoire is their voice and the voice of Singapore."

For example, Boo likes to play the mridangam with "Chinese musical language".

Nadi Singapura's co-founder Riduan Zalani, 34, has been studying Carnatic music at the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society for about three years, thinking it will help him work better with musicians from other cultures.

His instrument of choice is the Malay drum, the rebana.

He learns the taals or traditional Indian beats and rhythms "to be more proficient with others when we collaborate and to make the rebana as versatile as possible".

"I feel like I needed more vocabulary to my playing," he says.

"As professional musicians, we need to improve, to understand more. I'm learning because it will keep me more open to all permutations of rhythm."

akshitan@sph.com.sg

Great sounds from unusual unions

The Claypool Lennon Delirium's Sean Lennon (far left) and Les Claypool (left). PHOTO: THE CLAYPOOL LENNON DELIRIUM/FACEBOOK

The Claypool Lennon Delirium blend garage rock, folk and Indian classical music into melodic tunes, while Mercury Rev reinterpret the songs of folk/country singer-songwriter Bobbie Gentry

PSYCHEDELIC ROCK
SOUTH OF REALITY
The Claypool Lennon Delirium
ATO Records
★★★★☆

INDIE ROCK/ COUNTRY
BOBBIE GENTRY'S THE DELTA SWEETE REVISITED
Mercury Rev
Bella Union
★★★★☆

Eddino Abdul Hadi

A union between the son of a Beatles legend and one of rock's most eccentric bassists has resulted in one of the year's kookiest rock albums to date.

The Claypool Lennon Delirium is the musical pairing of Sean Ono Lennon, son of John Lennon and Japanese artist Yoko Ono, and Les Claypool, musician/novelist/director and prolific head of progressive/funk/metal veterans Primus.

South Of Reality, their second full-length album, sees the duo expand on the spacey, psychedelic sounds found on their 2016 debut Monolith Of Phobos, and 2017 EP, Lime And Limpid Green.

They complement each other, blending elements of garage rock, folk and Indian classical music into long and winding tunes.

Lennon brings to the fore his late father's musically whimsical tendencies, his melodic prowess proving to be a perfect foil to Claypool's adroit basslines and experimental impulses.

In the lyrics, they oscillate between satirical takes on modern life and the bizarre.

Easily Charmed By Fools, with its percussive bass playing and lush vocal harmonies, is a critique on the post-truth world, one over-run by Tinder-daters and those "drawn to artificial light", while Little Fishes takes on issues such as single-sex bathrooms and the over-dependence on Wi-Fi.

The sprawling Blood And Rockets tells the stranger-than-fiction true tale of American rocket engineer Jack Parsons, a man known as much for his pioneering work in science as well as his involvement with the occult.

Less peculiar, but still as musically adventurous, is the latest and ninth album by indie/psychedelic rock stalwarts Mercury Rev.

Instead of new and original songs, the band have decided to reinterpret the songs from The Delta Sweete, the severely underrated second album by folk/country singer-songwriter Bobbie Gentry released in 1968.

Gentry is now recognised as a pioneering female singer-songwriter and Mercury Rev assembled a formidable line-up of contemporary women singers from the pop, country and alternative rock world to breathe new life into her songs.

The arrangements have been dramatically altered, but the new versions are no less haunting than the originals.

Multi-Grammy winner Norah Jones executes a dreamy rendering of Okolona River Bottom Band while Mornin' Glory, featuring Stereolab's Laetitia Sadier, is a rich chamber-pop exercise in the style of Burt Bacharach.

Rising country star Margo Price brings a fiery bluster to the otherwise ominous Sermon, promising divine retribution on the "long-tongued liar", the "midnight rider" and the "gambler, rambler, backbiter" as Tobacco Road, with Norwegian singer Susanne Sundfor, features a tension-building verse that gloriously erupts into a lush chorus.

And while Beth Orton's formidable voice rings out on Courtyard, it felt odd to have Lucinda Williams sing Ode To Billie Joe.

That song came from Gentry's 1967 debut and not on The Delta Sweete, but was probably included because it is the song most people know her for.

dinohadi@sph.com.sg

MusicCharts

APPLE MUSIC

1. **(1) 7 Rings** – Ariana Grande
2. **(2) Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored** – Ariana Grande
3. **(5) Without Me** – Halsey
4. **(4) Dalla Dalla** – Itzy
5. **(6) Dancing With A Stranger** – Sam Smith and Normani
6. **(3) Thank U, Next** – Ariana Grande
7. **(8) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse)** – Post Malone and Swae Lee
8. **(-) Shallow** – Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper
9. **(7) Sweet But Psycho** – Ava Max
10. **(-) What's Wrong** – Eric Chou

• For the week of Feb 27 in Singapore

SPOTIFY

1. **(1) 7 Rings** – Ariana Grande
2. **(2) Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored** – Ariana Grande
3. **(3) I'm So Tired** – Lauv and Troye Sivan
4. **(4) Dancing With A Stranger** – Sam Smith and Normani
5. **(6) Way Back Home** – Shaun, Conor Maynard and Sam Feldt
6. **(8) Without Me** – Halsey
7. **(10) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse)** – Post Malone and Swae Lee
8. **(9) Sweet But Psycho** – Ava Max
9. **(5) Thank U, Next** – Ariana Grande
10. **(7) Dalla Dalla** – Itzy

• For the week ending Feb 27

BILLBOARD

1. **(1) 7 Rings** – Ariana Grande
2. **(4) Without Me** – Halsey
3. **(5) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse)** – Post Malone and Swae Lee
4. **(3) Thank U, Next** – Ariana Grande
5. **(-) Please Me** – Cardi B and Bruno Mars
6. **(6) Happier** – Marshmello and Bastille
7. **(7) Sicko Mode** – Travis Scott
8. **(2) Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored** – Ariana Grande
9. **(8) High Hopes** – Panic! At The Disco
10. **(9) Wow.** – Post Malone

• For the week of March 2

HIT FM

1. **(2) Windy** – Wu Ching-feng
2. **(1) Half A Life** – Ashin
3. **(3) Ugly Beauty** – Jolin Tsai
4. **(6) Make A Turn In Front** – Neko Highway
5. **(5) Talent** – Joker Xue
6. **(-) Nada** – Lexie Liu
7. **(8) I'm Fine** – Apple Kho
8. **(-) Dear** – Boon Hui Lu
9. **(11) A Half Is Me** – Chen Linong
10. **(-) Hubby** – Jolin Tsai

• For the week ending Feb 17

A laidback ride through Latin America

INDIE FOLK
LA ONDA DE JUAN PABLO
Juan Wauters
Captured Tracks
★★★★☆

Yeow Kai Chai

Listening to this bunch of vignettes by Juan Wauters, one is reminded of the words of American writer Paul Theroux: "Tourists don't know where they've been, travellers don't know where they're going."

Wauters, a Uruguay-born songsmith who moved to New York City in 2002, is certainly a traveller at heart. His third album is a gentle ramble through Latin America, as he meets new friends, hangs out, tastes fruit, shoots the breeze. You (and he, for that matter) do not know who he is going to meet and what is around the corner.

The not knowing, and the impromptu, propel his thirst for human connection, far away from a news cycle beleaguered by calls to build walls and the demonisation of immigrants.

"I brought a studio in my luggage and recorded songs along the way," he recalls in a clip embedded in an interactive map (*juanwauters.com/en/la-onda-de-juan-pablo*), which chronicles his travels and encounters with local musicians. This is complemented by the home-spun, unfiltered feel to the videos and photos, an antidote to the glossy touches favoured by the Instagram generation.

Despite its brevity – 10 songs in 30 minutes – there is a remarkably languorous pace to the album, as if exhorting the listener to chill, swig beer, watch the sunset. The record title, La Onda De Juan Pablo, translates roughly to "the vibe of Mr Pablo" (Pablo being his middle name), and you are welcome to come along for the ride.

The results are the stories of a reverse-migrant's experience, of rediscovering one's roots and compatriots. Wauters relishes the opportunity "to sing in my native language" and the album carries not only "the sound of all the musicians that participated", but also "their instruments, their traditions and their feelings".

Whether it is the limber, longing saxophone solo in Blues Chilango or the intriguing riffs of the guitarron chileno, a 25-string instrument of unknown origin, in Mi Vida (My Life), he lets the music guide him along.

Take, for example, the track Guapa, which means "beautiful" in Spanish, oft used as a compliment for damsels. Recorded in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the song features the ebullient performance of two young musicians whom he saw playing boleros at a restaurant for lechon (grilled pork), after the original, more well-known artist did not call back.

Juan Wauters is a singer-songwriter and guitarist born in Montevideo, Uruguay. PHOTO: CAPTURED TRACKS

The same spirit of serendipity goes for Un Buen Dia Hoy Sera (A Good Day Today), written as a march song for workers, and transformed here into an exquisite harp ballad care of a young man he chanced upon holding the instrument in Plaza 2 de Mayo in Lima, Peru.

It also explains why he inserts a spoken-word solo towards the end of Candombe Instrumental. Recorded in his home town of Montevideo, it pays homage to the candombe, a traditional Afro-Uruguayan drum rhythm, which has become an integral part of Uruguayan culture.

Wauters remembers being inconsolable after watching Uruguay get disqualified from the World Cup. He then wrote a poem about imagining himself as a child and dreaming to be a soccer player.

The genius, though, is in getting his father, Alberto, to recite it in Spanish, and in that one stroke, linking generations, nations and passions.

Jazz perfect for chilling out

JAZZ
FOR CENTENNIAL REASONS: 100 YEAR SALUTE TO NAT KING COLE
John Pizzarelli Trio
Ghostlight Deluxe
★★★★☆

Ong Sor Fern

This is the third album jazz guitarist/vocalist John Pizzarelli has dedicated to the master crooner Nat King Cole.

The line-up on his ensemble has changed from his career-defining 1994 Dear Mr Cole album. But there is no question that Pizzarelli's singing has matured in the interim.

His reedy tenor is no match for Cole's effortlessly silky timbre, but Pizzarelli makes up for it with snazzy guitar and canny singing.

The opener, Straighten Up And Fly Right, which he has recorded multiple times, is at a slower-than-expected tempo. Pizzarelli's lucid plucking is backed by Mike Karn's bouncy basslines and Konrad Paskudzki's clean piano accompaniment for a swingy but not frenetic take on the Cole classic.

Other Cole classics get equally charming renditions. Standout tracks include the chirpy It's Only A Paper Moon and the dancy Hit That Jive, Jack. But there are a couple of quirky rarities that give the familiar programme an unexpected goose: I'm Such A Hungry Man and Save The Bones For Henry Jones.

And to keep things perking a little, there are two original tunes.

Pizzarelli teams up with wife, singer Jessica Molaskey, to write A Hundred Years From Now, a charming tune that pilfers from the jazz canon for mash-up quotes for some classic jazz balladry.

And Nat King Cool is a swinging instrumental that offers a bright tribute to Cole.

This album is a keeper to put on repeat mode for chillout evenings.

Charming cello on show

HISTORICAL CLASSICS
LEONARD ROSE
Complete Concerto and Sonata Recordings
Sony Classical
88985490172
(14 CDs)
★★★★★

Chang Tou Liang

Besides being the teacher of renowned cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Lynn Harrell, American cellist Leonard Rose (1918-1984) is also remembered for his trio with violinist Isaac Stern and pianist Eugene Istomin.

These reissued recordings, originally issued on the Columbia Masterworks label date from 1945 to 1974, demonstrate the breadth, depth and wide-ranging scope of his artistry.

There are two recordings of Ernest Bloch's Hebraic rhapsody Schelomo (inspired by the life and passion of King Solomon). Recorded in 1951 (Dimitri Mitropoulos conducting) and 1961 (with Eugene Ormandy), his deep, voluminous singing tone may be best appreciated here.

Also duplicated is the popular tandem of Brahms' Double Concerto (1954 and 1964) and Beethoven's Triple Concerto (1949 and 1964), both with different partners and conductors.

Away from concertos, there are excellent accounts of cello sonatas by Schubert, Franck, Brahms, Grieg, Boccherini and Sammartini – all with pianist Leonid Hambro.

Previously unreleased and heard for the first time are two Beethoven sonatas (Op.69 and Op.102 No.2).

The latest recording is also the strangest: J.S. Bach's three Viola da gamba Sonatas, partnered by eccentric Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, who constantly tries to upstage him.

Many of the 1960s recordings enjoy highly realistic sound, as if just recorded yesterday.

Natalie Portman plays a survivor of a school shooting who becomes a pop sensation. PHOTO: SHAW ORGANISATION

The dark side of fame and pop culture

Vox Lux, starring Natalie Portman, is a movie that dissects celebrity and violence

Alison de Souza
In Los Angeles

In Vox Lux, Natalie Portman plays a girl who survives a school shooting, sings a song about it and becomes a huge pop star.

But as the movie attempts to dissect modern celebrity and violence, it left many moviegoers scratching their heads and critics rolling their eyes. And with a 60 per cent score on the website Rotten Tomatoes, it is one of Oscar-winner Portman's worst-reviewed films in years, although her performance received praise in some quarters.

At a screening in Hollywood last December, the actress and the film's writer-director, Brady Corbet, addressed the polarised reactions to their movie, which opens in Singapore today.

Corbet, 30, says he set out to "make a movie that was about the early part of the 21st century". And one of the defining characteristics of this century is "the spectacle of evil", explains Portman, 37.

"In this century, the pageantry of evil is that violence has become theatre, violence has become about making a show – making the news and getting on TV. It's all merging in this awful way," she says.

"When I read (the script) it was like, wow, that's something I hadn't really thought about – the collision between pop culture and political life and violence."

A story about a pop star captures the dark side of fame and pop culture in a way that an actor's story could not, she believes.

"I think pop stars, unlike actors, are presenting a version of themselves, so there's more at stake in terms of their fame, because we really see their personal relationships and ups and downs," says the star, who won the Best Actress Oscar for the psychological drama Black Swan (2010).

"We see their art as a representation of their inner life, whereas for actors, we always see them as separate from their roles."

Corbet says it is no coincidence the story starts in 1999, the year of the Columbine school shooting in Colorado as well as the height of singer Britney Spears' fame.

"I'm from Colorado and I lived there when Columbine happened," says the film-maker, who is also an actor from movies such as Funny Games (2007).

"It cast a shadow over the last 20 years in this country," he says, noting the many school shootings that have followed.

"I think it is one of the defining moments of our era."

Asked about how the film has divided audiences, Corbet concedes "it is a very unusual film".

"I think there are a lot of things you are not allowed to do (in films) – you are not allowed to have dramatic tonal shifts from melodrama to dark comedy and tragedy.

"But I believe in order for the film to be emblematic of the defining events of the 21st century, it had to be all of those things – equal parts absurdist and very serious."

The film opens with a shooting and concludes with a pop concert.

While acknowledging it is a "difficult pitch", he adds: "But I think the juxtaposition of the two exists in the culture and news cycle already. And with the convergence of pop culture and policy, I felt it was important to make a movie this way."

Corbet calls it an ambitious experiment and is glad that people have shown up to watch it.

"Even if people really don't like the film, I'm really thankful they spent two hours with it because it is very unusual. So I hope the whole thing opens a viewer's mind, or a part of it does. That's the best you can do."

Portman sees similarities between Vox Lux and her Oscar-winning film Black Swan, in that "both have an interest in performance and what it means to be someone who has a performative self versus a private self, and what that means".

She was also drawn to the larger-than-life character she plays, Celeste, and the "incredible dialogue that Brady wrote" for her.

"It's so extravagant, the stuff she says. It's like nonsense to real insight and back to this garbage – she's just all over the joint," the actress says. "And goes from being all pretence to a moment of being genuine.

"It was really fun to get to play with it."

stlife@sph.com.sg

• Vox Lux opens today.

Even if people really don't like the film, I'm really thankful they spent two hours with it because it is very unusual. So I hope the whole thing opens a viewer's mind.

VOX LUX WRITER-DIRECTOR, BRADY CORBET (right)

Musical satire about gun violence a cop-out

REVIEW / MUSICAL DRAMA
VOX LUX (NC16)
115 minutes/
Opens today
★★☆☆☆

The story: A troubled boy with a gun murders students and teachers in a high school. Celeste (Raffey Cassidy) escapes with injuries. At a memorial, when Celeste and her older sister Ellie (Stacy Martin) perform an original song about the attack, they become instant sensations. That moment is parlayed into a career by a manager (Jude Law). Years later, Celeste (Natalie Portman) is a pop star and mother.

John Lui

This work aims to be – take a deep breath – a musical, a satire, a piece of provocation about gun violence, a commentary about the corrupting effects of fame on artists who just want to make real art.

It aims, it fires, it misses every target.

American writer-director Brady Corbet, in his second outing as director, seems to want to make one of those brightly lit works of European pessimism, in which upbeat colours are married to the bleakest of outcomes. Think Gaspar Noe's death-dance musical Climax (2018) or Michael Haneke's suburban horror film Funny Games (2007), in which Corbet had a supporting role.

The happy music penned by real pop star Sia and music legend Scott Walker (formerly of the 1960s group The Walker Brothers, of The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Any More fame) is juxtaposed with images of kids and teachers mowed down by gunfire.

Celeste as a teen, played by Cassidy, is snatched up by the nameless manager (Law).

The wheels of promotion whirl and a decade or so later, Celeste, now played by Portman, is a global phenomenon. She is, surprise surprise, haunted by her past.

Corbet never makes clear which demon is tormenting her, but she appears to have post-traumatic stress disorder. And she has a gunshot wound near her throat – the organ that she, as a singer, needs most, just in case one misses the symbolism.

It sounds like a set-up for a story about the hollowness behind the glitz, or how pain is transmuted into great art – not the most original of themes, but it is something to work with.

Then come the distractions which muddy the waters, causing this viewer to lose confidence in the story.

Cassidy plays the young Celeste; she then reappears as Albertine, Celeste's daughter. Is Corbet saying something about how unresolved trauma returns like karma? There are less on-the-nose ways of doing it.

Then there is the obviousness of how this is a Portman vehicle, a way for her to show range not just emotionally, but also in fashion and dance styles influenced by Sia's enigmatic art-pop attitude.

Portman does a decent job, but she puts her talent in the service of scattershot material.

Is fame toxic?

When one sees what it has done to Celeste, the story seems to say yes – then come the long, lovingly composed musical sequences that suggest the opposite.

Centrism is not a position. It is not nuance. It is a cop-out.

Royal rumble

Mary Queen Of Scots deals with the relationship between the eponymous character and Queen Elizabeth I of England and the cost of political leadership

Will Lawrence
In London

Josie Rourke, director of Mary Queen Of Scots, has a request. "Can I appeal to you," she says midway through an interview with a handful of journalists in London in December last year, "not to call two or three movies in which women have leading roles a 'trend'.

"It's what should be happening more often, right?"

Rourke, artistic director of London's prestigious Donmar Warehouse theatre, has made her debut as a feature film director with Mary Queen Of Scots, a tale that deals with the 16th-century relationship between Queen Elizabeth I of England and Queen Mary I of Scotland. It opens today.

"While Mary and Elizabeth's story has been told many times, I asked the screenwriter behind (political drama) House Of Cards to write this story because I wanted them taken seriously as politicians and to understand what leadership meant to them and the cost of that power.

"We can never see change take a hold of society until we have enough cultural points on our map by which to navigate. And I wanted to create another of those points."

To create her cultural point, Rourke has two high-powered actresses, Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie, play Mary and Elizabeth respectively. Irish actress Ronan, 24, has been attached to a Mary Queen Of Scots film since she was a teenager.

"I signed up to play Mary when I was 18 and was attached to it the whole time, but it just took ages to get the right screenwriter involved and to figure what part of the story we wanted to tell," she says.

The film is a meditation on what it means to be a woman in power during the 16th century. "Mary and Elizabeth in this film are two sides of the same coin," says Ronan.

She adds: "Mary is younger and more naive in thinking she should be able to have it all, have the power and a family and everything that she wants. Elizabeth has been through a little bit more and realises that you have to choose one or the other.

"It is really interesting to have these two women ruling at the same time, but doing it very differently. You see how they were pushed to opposite ends of the spectrum."

Australian actress Robbie, 28, agrees. "I think there's a particular pressure on women not to express forms of emotion. Elizabeth's journey in this film is a very extreme version of that where you see her cut ties with her humanity and become this statuesque figure of a monarch."

Despite its Renaissance setting, many audiences and critics have spotted a contemporary relevance.

"It really does feel timely," says Robbie, "and I think a lot of that is what Josie brought to it and her vision for the piece. She certainly wove the thematics around the female experience, especially in that time, and it is very easy to find parallels with what we're dealing with now, in gender politics, being in positions of power, choosing family or career, any of those kinds of conversations."

Rourke, meanwhile, says that while any version of the past is a representation, it is the film-makers' duty to speak to the present. "And if people feel it's modern because it is talking about women's stories," she adds, "then that is because while women's stories have always existed, our opportunity to tell them as women is relatively fresh."

Women, says the director, are the theme of the movie. "In a way, it is both exciting and slightly sad that people think the film is incredibly modern.

"What that really tells us is that not enough women have been given the opportunity to make films, particularly set in this era of history. It shouldn't be remarkable."

Robbie received nominations from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (Bafta) and the Screen Actors Guild for best supporting actress.

But she had initially passed on the role as she felt intimidated by the potential comparisons to Cate Blanchett, Vanessa Redgrave, Helen Mirren and Judi Dench, all of whom have turned in memorable on-screen performances as the "Virgin Queen".

"Everyone is well aware that some of the world's most incredible actresses have portrayed Elizabeth already and, while it is incredible to join that legacy, there are some big shoes to fill," she says. "Also, I said I didn't know how to play a queen. I've got nothing in common with a queen."

Rourke, however, persuaded her by saying that she did not want Robbie to play a queen. She wanted her to play a woman.

The actress says: "And now I've had a chance to explore Elizabeth and to see her human side — the woman beneath the crown. I've found a way to relate to her and I'm grateful to have joined that legacy."

stlife@sph.com.sg

• Mary Queen Of Scots opens today

Mary Queen Of Scots stars Saoirse Ronan (above) as the eponymous character and Margot Robbie (right) as Queen Elizabeth.
PHOTOS: UIP

A weepie about a weak, naive queen

REVIEW / PERIOD DRAMA

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (M18)
125 minutes/Opens today/★★☆☆☆

The story: In 1561, Mary Stuart (Saoirse Ronan) comes to Scotland from France to take her place on the throne. By blood, she also has a claim on the throne of England, ruled by her cousin Elizabeth (Margot Robbie). As Catholic Mary tries to consolidate her power, firebrand Protestant minister John Knox (David Tennant) is doing his best to undermine it, often aided by the forces behind the Protestant Elizabeth. The two women find they have much in common, but that mutual respect is difficult to sustain in a climate of paranoia.

John Lui

If you have a feeling of deja vu, do not worry; it is not you, it is Hollywood.

This week, there are two palace pictures in cinemas. Both are Oscar-bait products, but one is clearly superior to the other. Guess which one this is.

For context: Queen Anne, a key character in The Favourite, is a monarch of the same Stuart lineage as Queen Mary, but who lived a century and a half after her.

But while one story is a comedy about the indignities people will tolerate for the sake of climbing the ladder, this movie is a sincere attempt at eliciting sympathy for a woman who finds herself in charge of a nest of vipers.

Mary truly wants to be a good regent, fair to Protestants and Catholics alike. She seeks to correct the sins of her forebears, among them King Henry VIII of England, he of the six wives.

Earnest historical dramas are a tricky play. Try too hard to sell the idea that a queen is a prisoner of her circumstances and the movie becomes a weepie about a weak, naive woman; makes her look too competent and heroic and it loses threat and drama.

This work's movie sin belongs to the former category. Ronan's Mary makes decisions here and there, but mostly she appears to be a pawn, hapless and bewildered.

American Beau Willimon made a name writing and producing the acclaimed Netflix political thriller series House Of Cards. As screenwriter here, he does not set a torch to the facts of Scottish history the way Mel Gibson did in Braveheart (1995).

He and British director Josie Rourke, making her feature debut after a long career in theatre, frame this as the story of two women, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, each of whom harbours complicated feelings of fear and respect for the other.

Rourke and Willimon pack the canvas with births and deaths, illnesses and recoveries, not to mention clerics, aristocrats and courtiers making speeches in static fashion. And a crucial battle that cements Mary's power, portrayed in such a confusing and sluggish manner that one wonders why they bothered showing it at all.

The result is a busy-looking catalogue of events that never add up to a story.

Ben Is Back stars Lucas Hedges as a recovering drug addict and Julia Roberts as his protective mother. PHOTO: SHAW ORGANISATION

Family drama with a twist

Ben Is Back revolves around a mother and her recovering drug addict son and their journey through the mean streets of middle America

REVIEW / FAMILY DRAMA

BEN IS BACK (NC16)

103 minutes/Now showing /★★★★☆

The story: In a picture-postcard suburban home just before Christmas, mother Holly (Julia Roberts) is shocked but happy to find that her son Ben (Lucas Hedges) is home from the drug rehabilitation centre to which he has been sent. His stepfather Neal (Courtney B. Vance) mistrusts Ben, believing that the recovering addict is using family leave as an excuse to seek drugs. Holly allows Ben to stay for one day, but on one condition: that he never leaves her sight.

John Lui

Deja vu, part two. This week, a second Oscar-bait story about royals on a rampage enters cinemas, and there is also this movie, an account of a parent and her addict son that will remind viewers of Beautiful Boy (2018).

The similarities are surface-deep, thankfully. Boy is based on a real and ongoing relationship and takes place over several years. This story is fictional and takes place over two days. It is based on writer-director Peter Hedges' friendships with people who are addicted to painkillers and interestingly, it stars his son Lucas in the titular role.

Side note: In a real-life A Star Is Born story, the older Hedges, who has an Oscar nomination for adapting the Nick Hornby book About A Boy into a screenplay for the 2002 movie starring Hugh Grant, had been in a creative slump. Meanwhile, his 22-year-old son is now a force in indie drama, appearing in acclaimed works such as Manchester By The Sea (2016) and Lady Bird (2017). When his father's screenplay for this project made the rounds, generating heat, the younger man reportedly asked to join the team and be treated as just another actor.

Both Lucas Hedges as the conniving charmer of a son and Roberts as his momma bear of a maternal figure give pitch-perfect performances.

Movies about suburban American families shattered by outside forces suffer from an excess of sentimentality intended to show how relatable and "normal" the home is before all hell breaks loose. But filmmaker Hedges trusts enough in his actors and audiences to let that happy home business exist in the background – he does not feel the need to flesh out every detail of this mixed-race family.

The first half of the film is a road movie. Mother and son go Christmas shopping and, in so doing, travel the mean streets he used to walk as a junkie and dealer.

The story weakens when it too obviously packs in newsy details about the opiate crisis. It is a netherworld where parents carry resuscitation kits in case their children overdose. Where doctors, not drug dealers, are the agents of destruction in their communities and where 24-hour pharmacies sell injection kits with nary a raised eyebrow, but baulk at carrying overdose first aid units.

The story then takes a twist that is, in a word, stupid. It turns the second half into a thriller.

The climax is a well-crafted cat-and-mouse game that is perfectly enjoyable on its own. But one wishes it had not been triggered by so silly a premise – one that jolts the viewer out of the neat little streets of a middle America blighted by needles and devastated by the deaths of young adults.

johnlui@sph.com.sg

Top10Movies

SINGAPORE

1. (-) Cold Pursuit
2. (1) Alita: Battle Angel
3. (-) Fall In Love At First Kiss
4. (2) How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World
5. (-) Happy Death Day 2U
6. (-) A Dog's Way Home
7. (4) The Lego Movie 2
8. (3) When Ghost Meets Zombie
9. (9) The Favourite
10. (5) The Knight Of Shadows: Between Yin And Yang

• Information from Cinematograph Film Exhibitors Association

UNITED STATES

1. (-) How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World
2. (1) Alita: Battle Angel
3. (2) The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part
4. (41) Fighting With My Family
5. (3) Isn't It Romantic
6. (4) What Men Want
7. (5) Happy Death Day 2U
8. (6) Cold Pursuit
9. (7) The Upside
10. (-) Run The Race

• Information from boxofficemojo.com

Car racing film is a drag

REVIEW / ACTION

HIT-AND-RUN SQUAD (PG 13)

134 minutes/Now showing/★★★☆☆

The story: Police detective Si-yeon (Gong Hyo-jin) gets demoted to the lowly hit-and-run squad when she mounts an unsuccessful attempt to expose a corrupt police commissioner. There, she meets Min-jae (Ryu Jun-yeol), a rookie police officer with a natural talent for racing. The pair team up to try and arrest rich and powerful businessman and race car driver Jae-chul (Cho Jung-seok), who is ruthless in his pursuit of fame, speed and power.

Jan Lee

Gong Hyo-jin plays a frustrated but tough-as-nails police detective in Hit-And-Run Squad. PHOTO: SHAW ORGANISATION

If Hit-And-Run Squad were a 90-minute movie, it would have been great. Unfortunately, the South Korean action flick runs about 40 minutes longer.

The film – about two cops trying to nab a corrupt police commissioner in cahoots with a ruthless Formula One race car driver – manages to be both gripping and entertaining for much of the first half.

While it is a hodgepodge of genres – a little action here, some undercover cop espionage scenes there, sprinkled with light romance and comedy – the plot progresses, thanks to the swift pace.

There is an exciting car chase, fight scene and showdown between two lead characters that leaves one breathless.

Too bad the movie does not wrap up there. It drags on, adding a sentimental father-son sub-plot to an already bloated story. There is also a bizarre ordinary-folks-save-the-day device which culminate in yet another extended car chase, fight scene and showdown between the same two characters.

The similar tropes mean the ending loses much of its impact.

And no matter how exciting, car chase scenes, when dragged for too long, turn tepid.

Thankfully, the star-studded cast give decent performances.

Gong pulls off a layered performance as a frustrated but tough-as-nails cop, who is at once cool and imposing but also jaded and vulnerable.

Ryu's earnest, goofy performance creates a believable front for his character's troubled past.

As the maniacal villain though, Cho, Gong's co-star in television series Jealousy Incarnate (2016), comes off like an evil children's cartoon character – more Mojo Jojo in The Powerpuff Girls than Batman's Joker.

The rest of the cast, which features Key of K-pop boyband Shinee, are fun background characters, who have little to do but bring some colour to the story.

Ultimately, the second half of the film puts the brakes on an otherwise enjoyable work.

Exclusively for subscribers of The Straits Times

WIN a dinner for two at Spring Court Restaurant

As part of Asian Masters 2019, which returns for its seventh edition from March 1, 2019 to Feb 29, 2020, The Straits Times is giving away a seven-course dinner at Spring Court Restaurant.

At this exclusive session, hosted by The Straits Times senior food correspondent Wong Ah Yoke, savour a delectable array of food, paired with a hand-picked selection of wine. The seven-course dinner at this local heritage restaurant features the Spring Court traditional popiah, traditional double-boiled bird's nest in whole chicken and crispy crabmeat roll with chicken liver and salted egg yolk.

The Straits Times is giving away five pairs of passes to the dining session on March 12 at 7pm. Each pair is worth $416 ++.

How to win

1. Download the SPH Rewards app.
2. Look for the giveaway in the Rewards section.
3. Press the "JOIN" button and answer this question: **The dinner on March 12 at Spring Court Restaurant features wine-pairing on its menu. True or False**

The contest ends on March 4. Terms and conditions apply.

sph rewards

ST news with benefits

THE STRAITS TIMES WE'VE GOT SINGAPORE COVERED

Subscribe now at stsub.sg or call 6388-3838

I Feel Bad stars Sarayu Blue as Emet and Paul Adelstein as her husband
PHOTO: NBCUNIVERSAL

Women, it's okay to feel bad

The cast and creator of television comedy I Feel Bad want to showcase universal experiences

Alison de Souza
In Los Angeles

American comedy has witnessed quite a few South Asian success stories in recent years, from series such as Mindy Kaling's The Mindy Project (2012 to 2017) to Aziz Ansari's Master Of None (2015 to present) to Hasan Minhaj's stand-up special Homecoming King (2017).

Now, there is a new television comedy, I Feel Bad, in which lead actress Sarayu Blue and creator Aseem Batra are Indian-American.

The show airs on Mondays at 9.30pm on Fox Life (Singtel TV Channel 301 and StarHub TV Channel 501) and streams on Fox+.

But like The Mindy Project, the show focuses less on the ethnicity of its protagonist, Emet (Blue), and more on universal experiences – in this case, the perfectionism that makes her constantly feel bad for not being a better wife, mother, daughter and career woman.

The series is executive produced by comedienne Amy Poehler, who, along with Batra and the cast, spoke to The Straits Times and other media at a Los Angeles press event last year.

Batra explains that the name of the show is tongue-in-cheek, so Emet will not feel bad about everything.

"It's complicated. Sometimes, she feels bad and, sometimes, she doesn't feel bad. I think that's part of being an empowered woman.

"It's, like, 'I guess I don't feel bad that, right now, I want to take care of myself before my kids'.

"We are trying to empower her by letting her feel things that, on a lot of television shows, women don't get to," says Batra, who was a producer on medical comedy Scrubs from 2006 to 2009.

Poehler, whose production company is behind the series, says this will get at a truth about when women try to "have it all".

"This is a lens with which to tell a working woman's story that I haven't quite seen before, which is this idea that whenever we're 'doing it all', there are about two or three things on that list that we feel like we're giving 10 per cent to," says the 47-year-old Parks And Recreation (2009 to 2015) star.

It is also a show about the trials and errors of parenting, adds Poehler, who has two sons, aged 10 and eight, with ex-husband and actor Will Arnett, 48.

"It takes a human and real look at parenting. The characters played by Sarayu and Paul (Adelstein, who plays Emet's husband) are a real team and what they share is the knowledge that they know little – that they're in over their heads a lot of the time.

"I love watching that messiness because I think, too often, the women in television are supposed to have all the answers, but they never get to 'show their work'. So, there are a lot of big mistakes and big swings."

Feeling bad is not unique to women, of course – the writers discovered this when they tapped their lives and those of the cast for story ideas.

"It's such a rich thing and it's not just women – guys have it, like, 'I don't work out enough' or 'I don't make enough money'," says Batra, who also drew from the humour book the show is based on, I Feel Bad: All Day. Every Day. About Everything by Orli Auslander.

For Emet, adding to the pressures of life are the expectations of her Indian parents and it is here the show gets more culturally specific.

Batra and Blue, both 43, identified with this as the children of Indian immigrants, something they bonded over.

Batra says: "We have a shorthand because we understand where our parents were coming from as immigrants.

"So, when we do a scene in which there's pressure on (Emet from her parents), she understands it – that our parents came here hoping we'd have an easier life in some ways and more opportunities."

But Batra's goal was to simply portray a family rather than specifically a mixed-heritage one (Emet's husband is white).

"What I'm excited about is the normalisation of a family that looks like this.

"If we make room for all kinds of colour on television, then people can tell stories in different ways," she says.

stlife@sph.com.sg

• I Feel Bad airs on Mondays at 9.30pm on Fox Life (Singtel TV Channel 301 and StarHub TV Channel 501) and streams on Fox+.

Japanese decluttering expert Marie Kondo has an unflagging belief in the organisational power of boxes in Netflix's Tidying Up With Marie Kondo.
PHOTO: NETFLIX

Has reality television gone soft?

WASHINGTON • Since The Real World debuted on MTV in 1992, reality television has given viewers so much anger: Accusations. Betrayals. Brawls. Plenty of chardonnay in the face.

In the past few years, though, there has been a collective softening on reality television.

After years of witnessing beautiful people shred their dignity to find a spouse or get off an island, viewers have rediscovered the comforts of regular folk whipping up custards and crafts, and getting tough on that messy garage.

Nice reality television has become a respite from all the real-life madness viewers cannot control.

There is a reason each episode of Making It, the NBC competitive crafts show hosted by Amy Poehler and Nick Offerman that aired its first season last summer, kicks off with Poehler saying: "Life is stressful enough. Let's make a show that makes you feel good."

The nice reality television formula is one that HGTV, the fourth most-watched cable channel last year, has been building since House Hunters hatched atop the real estate bubble two decades ago.

Whereas mean reality television feeds on scandal, nice reality television keeps it behind the scenes, if it must exist at all.

Shows such as the squeaky-clean Fixer Upper, a ratings magnet that wrapped up last year after five seasons, and Property Brothers, an HGTV cornerstone since it debuted in 2011, keep the drills whirring inside the home – ignoring the clamour of harsh reality outside of it.

The latest entry in the growing pantheon of nice reality television is Tidying Up With Marie Kondo, the Netflix show from Japan's decluttering expert, which released eight episodes at the start of the year.

Where Hoarders used horror-movie music to show the stuff Americans cannot get rid of, Kondo instead comes in, freshly dressed in her trademark white outfit and greets the messy home as if it is a Shinto shrine. She smiles at the junk drawers, coos at out-of-control closets and gushes in one insta-meme, "I love mess!"

The truth is, even if her clean-up strategies are just common sense masquerading as the latest in the #blessed witchcrafts, Kondo's positivity towards the slovenly home is a much-needed relief, especially for women who disproportionately clean the home more than men.

Kondo, who minored in women's studies in college, vicariously delivers permission and optimism, as well as an unflagging belief in the organisational power of little boxes.

When tension happens on The Great British Baking Show, which has been running in Britain since 2010, and in the United States since 2014, it typically gets resolved with sportsmanship and manners.

No one gets dragged or doxed or promises to start therapy, not even when Diana supposedly wrecked Iain's baked Alaska.

There is a great weight lifted knowing that the worst crisis viewers will suffer is some ice cream gone soupy. WASHINGTON POST

Telemad

Killer bite-sized shows

Actor Desmond Tan plays a serial killer, while Cheryl Chitty Tan (both left) plays his psychologist, in Toggle series Derek. PHOTOS: TOGGLE, YOUTUBE

Crime drama Derek and food documentary Flavorful Origins deliver despite their short running times

Yip Wai Yee

In an age when television viewers are spoilt for choice for content, it has become increasingly difficult for me to commit to lengthy, drawn-out programmes.

I find many Asian romance dramas, in particular, to be unbearably long – what with all the unnecessary flashback sequences and scenes featuring the couple doing a lot of intense staring at each other.

Which is why I am glad to have recently stumbled upon two series, which are short and sweet.

The running times for Singaporean crime drama Derek and Chinese food documentary series Flavorful Origins are only about 15 to 20 minutes each and both are surprisingly effective.

Derek, which can be streamed on Toggle, is a spin-off of Channel 5 crime drama Code Of Law (2012 to 2018), one of the better local television productions.

The title of the show here refers to Derek Ho, a serial-killer character introduced in Season 4 of Code Of Law and portrayed by home-grown actor Desmond Tan, who reprises the role here.

The Toggle series picks up from where Derek was last seen on television – jailed for the brutal murders of eight women.

As he has already been caught, the new 10-episode Web series presents the character in a different way. Instead of playing out his crimes, it attempts to understand his psyche.

So, there are a lot of conversations held in prison, where he tells his side of the story to psychologist Winnie Low (played by Malaysian actress Cheryl Chitty Tan), who then tries to link his criminal behaviour to his upbringing and family problems.

The approach is similar to Netflix's Mindhunter (2017), the fictional crime-drama series which features interviews with a number of serial killers.

Never mind that there is so much more talk than action this time around.

Tan remains convincingly creepy and compelling even when seated in his chair. A smirk, a sharp glance or a raised eyebrow is enough to convey his emotional intensity.

Just three episodes in and it is evident that Derek is a highly troubled man despite his ability to hide the signs underneath his handsome face and charming demeanour. Watching his insecurities unravel bit by bit is fascinating and makes him absolutely worthy of his own spin-off show.

Another series that has captivated me, albeit for different reasons, is Netflix's **Flavorful Origins**.

The show, which is narrated in Mandarin, offers audiences bite-sized looks at the cuisine of Chaoshan, a region in China's Guangdong province.

Each episode introduces a single dish or ingredient, but that is enough to make my mouth water. Whether it is thunder tea rice, kway teow or baked tofu cake, this is food porn at its best.

It is not just because of all the beautiful close-up shots of the food – although the cinematography is truly stunning, where you can see every flaky bit of a pastry – but the fact that the show also highlights the people who put these meals together.

Netflix series Flavorful Origins features not only dishes, but also the people who prepare them.

In the episode on fish balls, a family is featured pounding the lizardfish into paste and moulding them into fish balls.

As for the beef hotpot episode, a young apprentice watches on anxiously as his master samples his sliced beef cuts.

These people clearly treat their food with respect and that attitude is contagious.

yipwy@sph.com.sg

VIEW IT / DEREK

Streaming on Toggle

★★★½☆

FLAVORFUL ORIGINS

Streaming on Netflix

★★★★★

Eventbrite sets up localised platform here

Anjali Raguraman

To meet Singapore's growing appetite for live experiences such as festivals and conferences, event management and ticketing website Eventbrite launched its first localised platform on the Asian market in Singapore yesterday.

The United States-based platform, which allows individuals and businesses to create and manage their own events, has been on the Singapore market since 2012, and has since served as the platform for more than 90,000 events.

There has been 40 per cent year-on-year growth in the number of events that have been put on the platform here since it first entered the market, with the highest growth in events pertaining to food and wine, science and technology, and conferences and business events, which spurred the decision to set up a local presence.

"We see the live-experience economy is already booming in Singapore, but we want to lean into that and help fuel it," says Mr Phil Silverstone, 39, general manager for Eventbrite in the Asia-Pacific region, who was in town for the launch.

The localised platform at eventbrite.sg will mean payment processing in Singapore dollars and content that is curated for the local market.

Event creators also get insights into best practices via a blog to help them grow their businesses. Previously, payments were processed by online-payment system PayPal.

"The localised platform also allows us to turn on other features like reserve seating capability and advance payouts, which help event creators with cash flow by giving them access to funds ahead of the event," adds Mr Silverstone.

Eventbrite is part of a slew of existing ticketing platforms here, which includes Sistic, ApacTix, Sportshub Tix and Waave, as well as Australia's Ticketek, which announced last month that it was ramping up its presence in Singapore with its new ticketing portal, Ticketek Singapore.

Eventbrite, however, sits in the space between ticket platforms catering to the large-scale sporting and touring acts, and the other end of the spectrum, comprising events such as birthday parties and small gatherings.

Mr John Tan, 37, chief executive officer of Saturday Kids, which teaches children to code, has been using the platform since setting up his business in 2012.

Through Saturday Kids classes – which include programming, electronics and digital art – listed on Eventbrite, he and his team have taught more than 3,000 students about digital literacy.

"It's an easy, fuss-free way to get our courses up on the Internet for people to be able to buy tickets," says Mr Tan.

He also likes the ability to track ticket sales via the platform.

"We stick to a ratio of one instructor to six kids a class, so it is important there's a system that allows us to track how many slots have been taken up in real time," he says.

Other event creators, such as Singapore Wine Fiesta organisers The Straits Wine Company, welcome the localised version of the platform.

While Singapore Wine Fiesta has been using ticketing platforms such as Sistic, Waave and Eventbrite over the last 11 years, it switched to Eventbrite exclusively last year.

Unlike other platforms, Ms Rachel Westbrook, 42, senior business development manager at The Straits Wine Company, says it chose Eventbrite because it was easier to "offer different tiers of tickets and various promotions, send invitations and updates on the event to attendees, as well as seamlessly incorporate (the sign-ups) into admissions at the door".

She also welcomes the addition of payment methods such as credit and debit cards.

"This gives people more options because not everyone uses PayPal," she adds.

Eventbrite is the ticketing platform for events such as Singapore Wine Fiesta (top) and Saturday Kids (above). PHOTOS: SINGAPORE WINE FIESTA, SATURDAY KIDS

sweetspot
Partner Content

bizSAFE CONVENTION 2019

Looking out for one another

Achieving good safety standards at the workplace requires the commitment of both employers and workers. ST FILE PHOTO

Leading through safety means employers must take care of every worker, and individuals must take care of themselves and their co-workers

BY JAC WOO

There are no shortcuts to safety.

Achieving good safety standards at the workplace requires the commitment of both employers and workers, all of whom must ensure that proper safe work procedures are being implemented and practised continuously.

The theme for this year's bizSAFE Convention is "Take time to take care of your safety and health", which is an apt reminder that everyone should take a moment and think of how one can keep oneself and others safe and healthy at work.

Today, the convention is presenting this year's bizSAFE Awards to honour companies and individuals in the bizSAFE community who have demonstrated outstanding commitment towards improving their Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) standards.

A total of 50 awards will be presented: 11 bizSAFE Partner

進昇建築私人有限公司
PROGRESSIVE BUILDERS PTE LTD

Is honored to be awarded
The bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award 2019

We Are Proud To Be Your Business Partners

Cheng Yi Pte Ltd
DHS Engineering Pte Ltd
Ideal Plumbing Pte Ltd
Island Concrete (Pte) Ltd
King Wan Construction Pte Ltd
KH Foges Pte Ltd
Manta Equipment(S) Pte Ltd
Rockmann Pte Ltd
Sheng Yi Construction Pte Ltd
Sun Jin Hong Construction Pte Ltd
Sunway Concrete Products(S) Pte Ltd
Wan Sheng Hao Construction Pte Ltd
Willy Insurance Brokers Pte Ltd
YL Integrated Pte Ltd
Guo Sheng Construction Pte Ltd
Lea Hin Co (Metal Factory) Pte Ltd
OES Construction Pte Ltd
Parexgroup Pte Ltd
Tilecon Pte Ltd
Transco-Pac Transport & Environmental Pte Ltd

The increase in the number of bizSAFE award applicants this year shows that bizSAFE is gaining traction in the industry, says Mr Ng. PHOTO: TED CHEN

Awards, 24 bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Awards (including two Gold Awards), nine bizSAFE Champion Awards and six bizSAFE Enterprise Progressive Awards.

Organised annually by the WSH Council and supported by the Ministry of Manpower, the Singapore National Employers Federation and the National Trades Union Congress, the bizSAFE Convention is now in its 11th year of celebrating the achievements of the bizSAFE community.

"Compared to 2018, we had a 75 per cent increase in the number of award applicants this year. This goes to show that bizSAFE is gaining traction in the industry.

"It serves as a benchmark for companies to illustrate how WSH-ready they are," says Mr John Ng, chairman of the WSH Council.

Ensuring a safer future for everyone

Inspection findings have revealed that most workplace accidents could have been prevented by measures such as carrying out better risk assessments and conducting regular checks to ensure that adequate safety measures are put in place.

"We would like to urge companies to adopt the bizSAFE programme — to first strengthen their Risk Management (RM) capabilities, and then start building a culture of care for their employees at the workplace," says Mr Ng.

He also encourages the senior management of companies to '"walk the talk" and do regular walkabouts at workplaces, as well as to speak to their workers about their work processes and challenges.

"By doing so, they will not only demonstrate care for their workers but also better understand the WSH issues that workers face at work. This allows them to implement preventive measures to address such issues," he explains.

In the next five years, he hopes to see the pervasive adoption of the Vision Zero mindset, where the industry proactively seeks to prevent all injuries and work-related ill health, and more companies build up their RM capability through the bizSAFE programme.

"To achieve this, the WSH Council will continue to work together with the Ministry of Manpower and its tripartite partners in building collective ownership through industry involvement.

"We hope all workers can take care of their own safety and health at work and look out for their co-workers; and employers continue to care for every single worker," he says.

For details on how to apply for the bizSAFE programme, visit www.wshc.sg/bizSAFE

Winners of bizSAFE Awards 2019

bizSAFE Partner Award

Recognises bizSAFE Partners that are proactive and committed in bringing organisations on board the bizSAFE programme by incorporating Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) efforts as part of their business models (such as having bizSAFE Level 3 as one of the criteria in procurement contracts).

1	Bintai Kindenko Private Limited	7	Gammon Construction Limited Singapore Branch
2	SBS Transit Ltd	8	Rich Construction Company Pte. Ltd.
3	Lendlease Retail Investments 1 Pte. Ltd.	9	Wah Loon Engineering Pte. Ltd.
4	Ed. Zublin Ag, Singapore Branch	10	Lendlease Retail Investments 3 Pte. Ltd.
5	Greatearth Corporation Pte. Ltd.	11	C&W Services (S) Pte. Ltd.
6	Straits Construction Singapore Private Limited		

bizSAFE Enterprise Progressive Award

Recognises bizSAFE Enterprises for their efforts in improving WSH and dedication to the bizSAFE programme. These enterprises would also have progressed from bizSAFE Level 1 to Level 3 within six months.

1	Albedo Design Pte. Ltd.	4	M & N Aviation Materials Pte. Ltd.
2	SKS Marine & Offshore Engineering Pte. Ltd.	5	MR Marine SEA Pte. Ltd.
3	Jetstream Aerospace Private Limited	6	Tubetechs Offshore Pte. Ltd.

bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award

Recognises bizSAFE Level STAR enterprises based on their outstanding WSH performance.

1	Greatearth Corporation Pte. Ltd.	13	Puretech Engineering Pte. Ltd.
2	Austin Energy (Asia) Pte. Ltd.	14	Megastone Holdings Pte. Ltd.
3	Zheng Keng Engineering & Construction Pte. Ltd.	15	Vigcon Construction Pte. Ltd.
4	Penguin Engineering & Construction Pte. Ltd.	16	Antara Koh Private Limited
5	Progressive Builders Private Limited	17	Sixty-Six Switchgears Co Pte. Ltd.
6	Hytech Builders Pte. Ltd.	18	Facility Link Pte. Ltd.
7	Nippon Builders Pte. Ltd.	19	Wee Chwee Huat Scaffolding & Construction Pte. Ltd.*
8	DLE M&E Pte. Ltd.	20	United Singapore Builders Pte. Ltd.
9	Galmon (S) Pte. Ltd.*	21	Jim & Hall's Pte. Ltd.
10	Kwan Yong Construction Pte. Ltd.	22	Asiabuild Construction Pte. Ltd.
11	Marina Properties Private Limited	23	Teambuild Engineering & Construction Pte. Ltd.
12	Bok Seng Logistics Private Limited	24	CKMbT International Pte. Ltd.

**Gold Award recipients — enterprises that have won the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award for three consecutive years*

bizSAFE Champion Award

A sub-category of the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Awards that recognises individuals who have been proactive in driving bizSAFE and raising the risk management capabilities of their organisations. These individuals are employees nominated by recipients of the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Awards.

1	Tomabo Jiao, manager, Sixty-Six Switchgears Co Pte. Ltd.	6	Gerald Ho Kuan Kee, senior project manager, Greatearth Corporation Pte. Ltd.
2	Didarul Islam, assistant site manager, Wee Chwee Huat Scaffolding & Construction Pte. Ltd.	7	Vikneshwaran Sammadan, WSHO, Megastone Holdings Pte. Ltd.
3	Sandy Tan Sok Chin, senior executive, Galmon (S) Pte. Ltd.	8	Karuppaiya Rayadurai, project safety manager, Antara Koh Private Limited
4	Duncan Tan, project manager, United Singapore Builder Pte. Ltd.	9	Jo Wang Er Yu, senior executive, Facility Link Pte. Ltd.
5	Mohamed Indra Gunawan Mohamed Noor, senior executive, protection management, Marina Properties Private Limited		

Pumping up safety measures

CKMbT International leaves no stone unturned in ensuring that every worker stays safe

BY MICHELLE CHIN

CKMbT International's managing director Abhishek Murthy (left) and chairman Chitaldroog Keshava Murthy believe in good safety management systems, safe work procedures, safety promotions as well as risk assessments and mitigation. PHOTO: TED CHEN

Every construction worker is a son, brother, husband or father with loved ones awaiting his safe return home.

It is with this belief that CKMbT International draws up workplace safety procedures and makes decisions on day-to-day operations at work sites.

CKMbT is a civil and structural engineering and project management consultancy that designs and supervises construction projects.

Once engaged by its clients, CKMbT's duties include designing temporary and permanent structures for construction projects.

It supervises the execution of work done by the main contractor which is hired by the client to carry out the construction work. Most of the workers at the construction sites are hired by the main contractor and their sub-contractors.

Besides that, the company participates in safety dialogues, conducts on-site safety audits and manages independent safety promotions for workers.

Although the construction workers are not staff of CKMbT, the company believes it has a moral obligation to keep the men safe.

For CKMbT, an important criterion is how best to eliminate hazards for the construction workers who typically face a fair share of safety and health hazards.

To illustrate the point, Mr Yusman Kamis, the safety manager of CKMbT, cited an incident which took place last year.

He and several colleagues visited a work site in southern Singapore to carry out risk assessments and found that the main contractor's proposed method to demolish a pump sump, which is used to drain sewage and water from an underground sump pit, had safety loopholes.

The main contractor's suggested method confined the machinery and the workers to a very small working space and increased the likelihood of an accident.

CKMbT rejected the proposed method and presented an alternative method that provided a firm working base and a bigger maneuvering space for not just one, but up to three excavators.

The suggestion also eliminated risk of falling into the sump pit and sped up the demolition. As a result, the main contractor completed work well ahead of schedule with no accidents.

The method proposed by CKMbT not only helped prevent accidents, but also increased productivity and cost savings.

> Our employees, project workforce, partners, clients, customers are humans. They are very important assets to us. Their safety is of paramount importance.
>
> MR ABHISHEK MURTHY
> managing director
> CKMbT International

Managing director Abhishek Murthy says that his company carries out and reviews risk assessments for all projects. The high regard given to upholding safety standards earned CKMbT the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award — the first bizSAFE award for the company.

Founded in 2000 in Singapore by chairman Chitaldroog Keshava Murthy, CKMbT today has about 160 staff based in Singapore and its overseas subsidiaries. It also has operations in India, Myanmar and Malaysia.

In Singapore, its services are engaged by government organisations, statutory boards and companies in the private sector.

"Our employees, project workforce, partners, clients, customers are humans. They are very important assets to us. Their safety is of paramount importance," Mr Abhishek says.

"Also, upholding site safety elevates CKMbT's reputation and level of professionalism," he adds.

sweet

CONTENT STRATEGY DIRECTOR Grace Sung **EDITOR** Nur Syahiidah Zainal **STORYTELLERS** Jac Woo, Luke Tan, Michelle Chin, Nivani Elangovan, Rachel Tan, Tay Hwee Peng **SUB-EDITORS** Belinda Wan, Paula Grosse **ART DIRECTOR** Pradip Kumar Sikdar **ART AND DESIGN** Hsu Li, Kimmie Tan, Sara Tan **CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER** Ted Chen **BUSINESS OPERATIONS MANAGER** Sumathi Ramu **ADVERTISING SALES** Simon Kang 9185 6185

For editorial-related inquiries, e-mail sweetinfo@besweet.sg. For sales inquiries, e-mail mkgsales@sph.com.sg or call 6319-8611.

bizSAFE STAR

Recipient of
bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award
2018 & 2019

JIM & HALL'S
building quality

A leading architectural and interior builder through the provision of consistent, timely corporate real estate solutions that meet client's needs and business goals.

Jim & Hall's Pte Ltd since 1989
www.jimhalls.com

CKMbT

CKMbT International Pte Ltd, a Professional Engineering Consultancy Company, is truly honoured to be the 1st Engineering Consultant to be awarded the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award.

WE DO!

CARE ABOUT SAFETY & SECURITY
CARE ABOUT HEALTH & WELL BEING
CARE ABOUT ENVIRONMENT

CKMbT International, a multi-disciplinary professional engineering consultancy company, provides civil & structural design services, mechanical & electrical engineering design services and project management consultancy services. In all our projects which include building, infrastructure and industrial projects, we always strive for the best. Through our offices in Singapore, India, Myanmar and Malaysia, we support our clients in Asia. We provide services covering all stages of a facility's asset life cycle, starting from feasibility studies to demolition. We aim to be the first choice for our clients, employees and partners by operating on the highest level of professional competency, maintaining the highest standards of ethics and offering the best quality of service while caring for everybody's safety, security, health, and the environment.

Having won several Design Awards and received recognition for setting performance benchmarks, we are proud to have achieved this milestone of having included safety not only in our designs but also in managing projects during the construction stage and handing over to the final users of any facility we design. We are proud to have received this prestigious award. This is just the beginning of our journey. Our endeavor is to continue to strive for greater heights at all times.

We wish to thank all our clients and partners for their continued support throughout the years. Our utmost appreciation and gratitude to all our employees without whom our achievements would not be possible.

WE DO!!!

OUR SERVICES

- CIVIL & STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
- MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING
- GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING
- STRUCTURAL RESTORATION
- FEASIBILITY STUDIES
- PROJECT MANAGEMENT
- PERMITTING SERVICES

CONGRATULATIONS FROM:

- Oneberry Technologies Pte Ltd Singapore
- Terratech Engineering Pte Ltd Singapore
- AEM Consultants Sdn Bhd Malaysia
- CKM Consultants (India) Pvt Ltd India
- RCY Pte Ltd Singapore

URS OHSAS 18001 · URS ISO 14001 · URS ISO 9001 · UKAS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS 0043 · bizSAFE STAR

Tel: (65) 6337 4400 www.ckmbt.com.sg
Email: ckmbt@ckmbt.com.sg

Education is key to keeping workers safe

Interior design firm Jim & Hall's shares how it builds a safety-first thinking culture

BY TAY HWEE PENG

Cultivating a safe workplace culture boils down to the individual taking responsibility for his or her own safety. When that happens, the rest falls in place naturally.

"Our safety approach is to educate, not exercise punishments at the first instance of non-compliance," says Mr Mok Thye Wai, the director of interior design firm Jim & Hall's.

"You cannot be watching them 24 hours a day. The minute the safety officer turns his or her back, the workers can choose not to follow safety rules. They know when they can take a chance," the 57-year-old adds.

This is why it is so important to keep drilling into them the message of workplace safety.

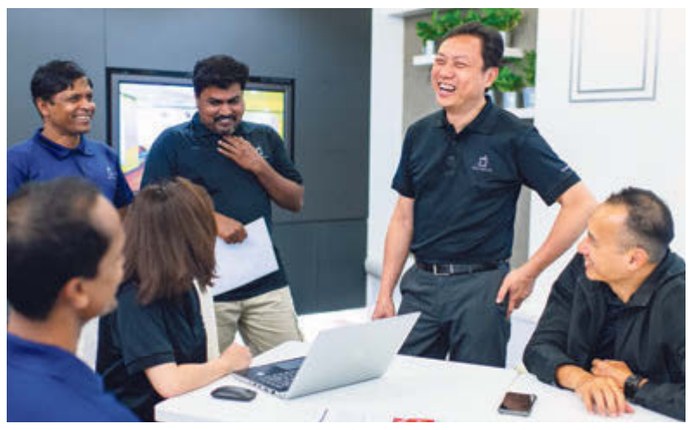
"The workers themselves have to understand why safety is so important. It must become second nature for them to follow safety rules and be mindful of the potential risks they themselves could be exposed to in their course of work," says the father of three.

Jim & Hall's, a winner of the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award (EEA) for the second consecutive year, has achieved a 100-per-cent clean safety record since it was established in 1989.

Busting a commonly held myth that workplace safety measures are applicable only to construction worksites, Mr Mok says: "Any place of work, in or out of the office, should be considered a workplace."

His firm focuses mainly on corporate office interior fit out works for multi-national companies. Its customers include Bloomberg, Oracle, Singapore Airlines and HSBC.

Among other things, Jim & Hall's holds regular safety campaigns to spread awareness about workplace safety among its employees, clients, vendors, sub-contractors and the workmen working on its projects at various sites across Asia.



Jim & Hall's director Mok Thye Wai (second from right) having a safety discussion with his staff. PHOTO: TED CHEN

He adds that those at the management level needs to take the lead by getting involved in safety campaigns. "This shows that safety is everyone's business," he explains.

Spread awareness

Jim & Hall's also shares with its six regional offices across Asia the latest safety news it gets from the WSH Bulletin, a free electronic newsletter published by the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council.

"Although not all cases are relevant to our interior industry, they serve as a case study to remind everyone of the importance of safety and not take it for granted," says Mr Mok.

Even though the company regularly conducts spot checks at worksites and imposes fines on repeat offenders, Mr Mok stresses that "the penalty system is set as a deterrence and we hardly need to issue fines at any of our sites".

He says that the safety officers at the sites mostly issue warnings, imposing fines only on repeat offenders.

As part of a fine-and-reward system that Jim & Hall's uses to motivate the people working on its projects, the money collected from the fines is used to fund prizes given out at monthly on-site safety quizzes.

Those who answer the questions correctly get rewards such as water bottles and shoe bags.

"Instead of punishment, we focus on motivation through participation/sharing sessions, acknowledging their views and implementing on the ground," says Mr Mok.

"Continual education of the workforce has always been our primary direction since the beginning, not enforcing compliance through punishments," he adds.

The firm, however, takes a hardline approach against black sheep.

"Some recalcitrant workers have been barred from the sites. If those who violate rules are seen getting away with their bad behaviour, it will only influence and embolden the others," says Mr Mok.

PHOTO: TED CHEN

Putting people first

TeamBuild Engineering & Construction integrates technology into its procedures to ensure workplace safety

BY NIVANI ELANGOVAN

Simulated walk-throughs of construction sequences, drones for safety inspections and capturing safety lapses with a smartphone — these are ways TeamBuild Engineering & Construction leverages technology to ensure that its workers remain safe.

The bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award winner firmly believes that a good workplace safety record boosts employees' morale, and increases productivity and efficiency. In turn, the company gains confidence when projects of a high standard are delivered to clients.

"The best motivation for every individual is knowing that we place a high importance on the well-being and safety of our staff," says Mr Johnny Lim (left), executive director at TeamBuild.

Using tech for safety

He adds: "We are constantly exploring the adoption and integration of technology into our construction processes to build smart worksites that can help to track safety practices and compliances."

To date, TeamBuild has put a mobile environment, health and safety (EHS) system in place that allows smartphones to capture real-time safety lapses on site, so that responses and follow-ups by the workers are almost immediate.

Building Information Modelling (BIM) also enables the study of site utilisation and construction sequencing planning, as well as crane capacity and fall prevention development processes to be studied and analysed ahead of work starting on a site.

TeamBuild's latest technological adoption uses virtual reality to simulate construction processes so that building sequences can be planned effectively before their actual execution to work out potential hazards and put the necessary safety provisions in place.

Similarly, virtual reality can simulate work-at-height risks, which help workers to take the necessary steps to prevent associated accidents.

Success as a bizSAFE partner

Says Mr Lim: "We make a deliberate effort to reach out to our sub-contractors and employees to be part of our workplace safety and health journey. Through this, they are made more aware of safety requirements and are better equipped to handle the challenges on-site."

He attributes TeamBuild's successful safety management to the following key points: the right motivating factors, leadership commitment, and continual improvements to workplace safety and health.

"We place the safety of our staff as the single most important factor, and all our efforts are centred on achieving that," he says, adding: "Our management takes the lead by being directly involved in the policy, direction and even inspection of the sites.

TeamBuild's workplace safety and health team also constantly updates staff on new regulations and safety findings, to ensure that suitable control measures are introduced when necessary.

Mr Lim believes that it is important to not get complacent and let one's guard down, as that is when accidents happen.

"TeamBuild will continue to strengthen the safety culture in the organisation, and that takes time, teamwork, effort, persistence and commitment from everyone."

光榮建築

KWAN YONG CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD

is honoured to be awarded the

bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award 2019

CHALLENGE THE LIMITS • MANAGING WSH EXCELLENCE

GREEN AND RACIOUS BUILDER Excellent bizSAFE STAR bizSAFE Partner

Certificate No: AJA02/4548 Certificate No: AJA97/1107 Certificate No: AJA(S)99/Q1040 Certificate No: AJA(S)17/S2039

11 JOO KOON CRESCENT SINGAPORE 629022 Tel: 6898 2323 Email: kwanyong@kwanyong.com.sg

sweetspot Partner Content

bizSAFE CONVENTION 2019

Aiming for the sky

Kwan Yong Construction wants to take its workplace safety inspection to a new high

PHOTO: TED CHEN

BY JAC WOO

From ear to the ground to eye in the sky, Kwan Yong Construction wants to leave no stone unturned in ensuring good workplace safety and health (WSH) practices. The company plans to leverage technology to take WSH to even greater heights.

Says the company's director Jacob Wong San Ta (above), 50: "We are looking into the use of drones in our WSH inspection and monitoring."

Kwan Yong is committed to achieving its goal of WSH excellence with the same smarts that saw the company — which started in 1984 — grow from a small outfit doing renovation works into the building specialist it is today.

Delivering construction projects across the public, commercial and private sectors, it prides itself on completing complex projects to the highest industry standards without compromising on the safety of its workers.

For its outstanding WSH performance, Kwan Yong Construction won the bizSAFE Exemplary Award this year for the third time, after garnering it in 2016 and 2018.

A culture embraced by all

Safety is the bedrock of the company's culture, stresses Mr Wong. To motivate its workforce to embrace a safety culture, the company embraces:

- **WSH communication:** The importance of safety is conveyed to workers, sub-contractors and WSH committee members in daily, weekly and monthly meetings respectively.
- **Training:** Continuous in-house and third-party WSH training is provided for all site personnel.
- **Leading by example:** The management is fully committed to supporting WSH and conducts regular site visits to address such matters. The company's WSH personnel continuously monitor, inspect and audit the worksites, provide WSH-related advice and educate site personnel on safety issues.
- **WSH promotion:** Exemplary staff are recognised by a quarterly promotion for "Best Safety Worker/Supervisor", and winners are rewarded with vouchers or cash. The WSH site and national statistics are shared with the staff to raise their awareness of safety practices around them.
- **Worker involvement:** The company emphasises whistleblowing on unsafe practices, workers are involved in risk management, and their representative gets to lead Toolbox meeting briefings.

Soaring to greater heights

As a result of the company's safety culture, workers in Kwan Yong Construction have become proactive towards WSH, observes Mr Wong.

"Our site personnel take the initiative to ensure safety compliance is in order before starting work. Similarly, they will put on their personal protective equipment without being asked to," he says.

To ensure a safer future, the company is aiming for very high standards — a safety record with zero accidents.

"Zero accidents means everyone gets to go home safely after work. It also improves productivity and enhances workers' peace of mind.

"An excellent safety record will also boost our business's competitive advantage and our company's image," Mr Wong explains.

丰盛建筑有限公司
Rich Construction Company Pte Ltd
(Subsidiary of China Construction (South Pacific) Development Company Pte Ltd)

bizSAFE Partner

WINNER OF
bizSAFE PARTNER AWARD 2019

The Group aims to continue our strong commitment to excellence by tapping on our talent pool, technology expertise and strong management system, adopting Total WSH with holistic & pragmatic risk management.

We will continue to fulfill and achieve greater expectations for all our valued clients, business partners and stakeholders.

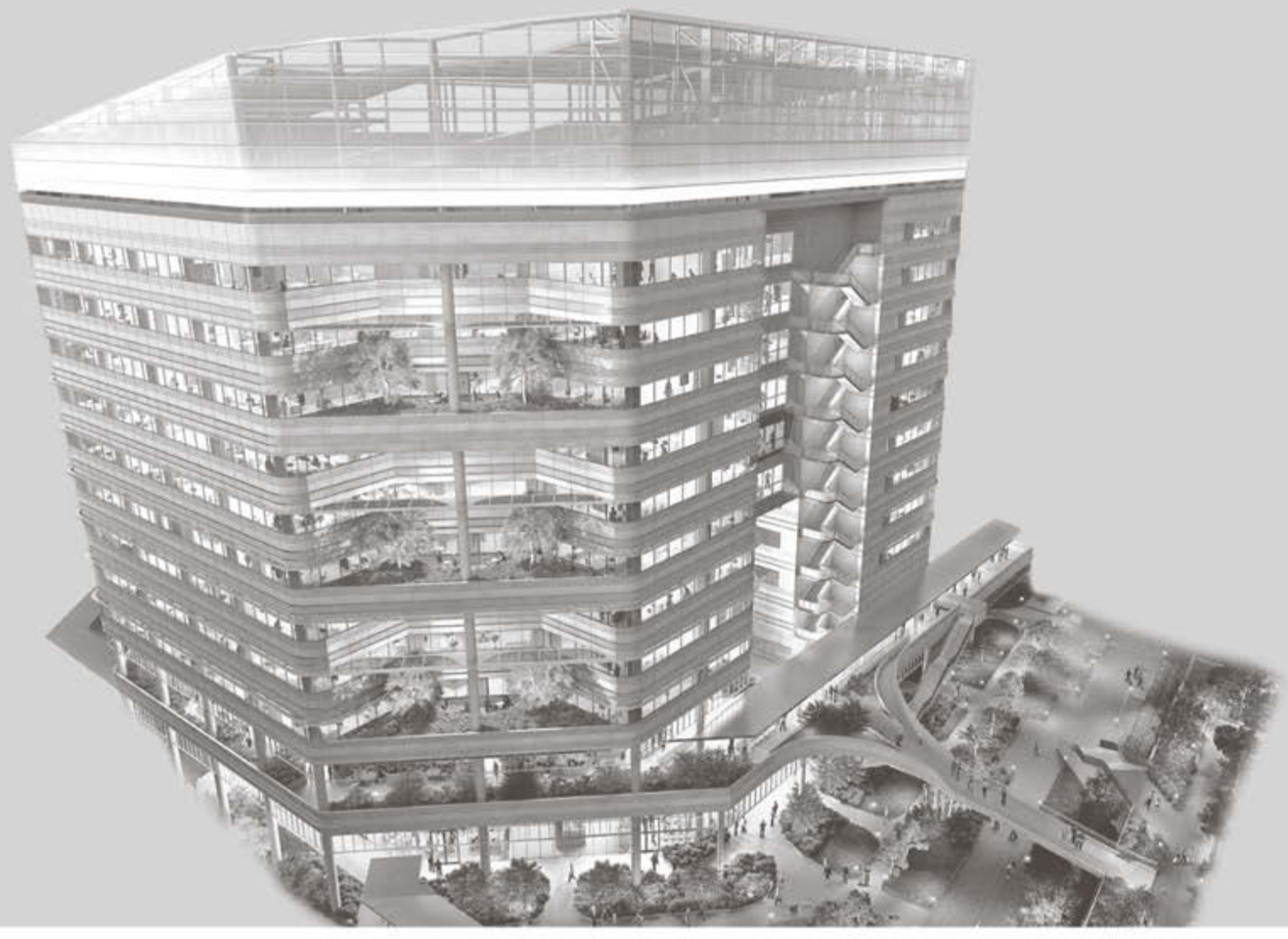
182 Cecil Street #31-01 Frasers Tower Singapore 069547
Tel: 65-6227 4537 Fax: 65-6227 5073

BOUSTEAD PROJECTS

82 Ubi Avenue 4 #07-01, Edward Boustead Centre
Singapore 408832
Main: +65 6748 3945 | Fax: +65 6748 9250
Web: www.bousteadprojects.com

bizSAFE STAR bizSAFE Mentor

SINGAPORE QUALITY CLASS
GREEN AND RACIOUS BUILDER Excellent



HAS A VISION
TO BE KNOWN FOR A HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACE WHERE WORK IS DONE AND LIVES ARE SAFE

WITH A MISSION
TO CHANGE MINDSET AND BUILD A STRONG HEALTH & SAFETY CULTURE AND MAKE SAFETY THE WAY TO GO

SAFE WORK + SAVE LIVES

Congratulations from our trusted partners

ID21 Transformation At Work
ID21 Pte Ltd

平潭建筑私人有限公司
PING TAN CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD

UTRACON
Utracon Structural Systems Pte Ltd

Foong Hwa Aluminium Pte Ltd
Le Fong Engineering Pte Ltd
Maxbond Singapore Pte Ltd
Pact Builders Pte Ltd
SL Yap Trading Enterprises Pte Ltd
Top Plasterceil Pte Ltd

sweetspot Partner Content

PHOTO: TED CHEN

Safety starts with you

Sixty-Six Switchgears' people-centric culture ensures that the best safety practices are enforced

BY RACHEL TAN

"Safety goggles, glove, helmet and boots, always remember to wear your safety suits…"

This jingle echoes through the Gul office of electrical engineering service provider organisation Sixty-Six Switchgears. The catchy tune is played at least once a week to remind its staff of the importance of workplace safety.

More than half of its employees are electrical engineers and technicians whose main job duties are to undertake installation, maintenance, upgrading and testing of electrical equipment. Electrocution, burns and falling from height are the top job hazards they face at work sites.

The song was put together by 31-year-old business executive Tomabo Jiao Jian at the suggestion of managing director Peter Tham (left).

Sixty-Six Switchgears received its first bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award this year and Mr Jiao also won one of nine bizSAFE Champion Awards for his vital contributions in improving his company's workplace safety and employees' health.

Apart from the safety song, the company also conducts internal safety audits once every three months and monthly Heart-to-Heart management-led sessions during which employees are encouraged to give feedback on unsafe acts and conditions, and share ways to improve work practices and procedures.

Mr Tham, 65, explains that all employees must attend safety induction and training with the Ministry of Manpower to equip them with up-to-date safety knowledge and the practices in the industry.

"People are our assets, so it is important for us to enforce safety rules and ensure they are carried out," says Mr Tham.

This people-centric approach to safety also extends to the emotional well-being of Sixty-Six Switchgears' staff. Five years ago, Mr Tham implemented the "light duty time out" for staff returning from compassionate leave.

"With limited days of compassionate leave, our employees may be forced to return before they are ready," says Mr Tham. "Instead of getting them to go on-site distracted, "light duty time out" allows them to work indoors first before they take up on-site assignments."

These actions, among many others, have helped to cultivate a positive attitude towards safety, allowing the company to maintain good safety records over the past few years.

Moving forward, Sixty-Six Switchgears has its sights set on even bigger awards and certification under bizSAFE — the bizSAFE Gold award and a bizSAFE Partner status.

Making safety a habit

To prevent potential workplace hazards, Wee Chwee Huat Scaffolding & Construction makes safety its first priority

BY JAC WOO

When one's business involves people working at heights and dealing with high-risk operations such as erecting and dismantling scaffolds, there is no room for safety lapses.

This principle has been a mainstay of Wee Chwee Huat Scaffolding & Construction's workplace safety and health (WSH) practices — and it is paying off.

The company has won bizSAFE awards continuously since 2014, and it is a winner again this year of two accolades — the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award (Gold) and the bizSAFE Champion Award.

The bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award recognises bizSAFE Level STAR enterprises that have exhibited outstanding WSH performance.

Enterprises that have won the Exemplary Award for three consecutive years will be honoured with a Gold Award, which Wee Chwee Huat is bagging for the second time.

The bizSAFE Champion Award recognises individuals who have been proactive in driving bizSAFE and raising the risk management capabilities of their organisations.

Learning from case studies

Wee Chwee Huat Scaffolding & Construction has been providing quality scaffold services for the construction industry since 1991.

"We are facing risks constantly in our daily operations, thus it is our responsibility to ensure we reduce the risks that we are exposed to," says Mr V. Manimaran (above, right), 50, the operations manager of the company.

"Safety is our first priority, and it is wise to learn from existing case studies to protect ourselves from any potential hazards," he adds.

Based on his observation of workplace incidents in Singapore in the first half of last year, he noticed that out of five fatal falls that occurred, four of them were due to open sides and fragile surfaces at the workplace.

He explains: "As we also face the potential hazard of open sides, we implemented the 'Sure Safe' method, which is a measure beyond the regulation imposed to counter falling incidents.

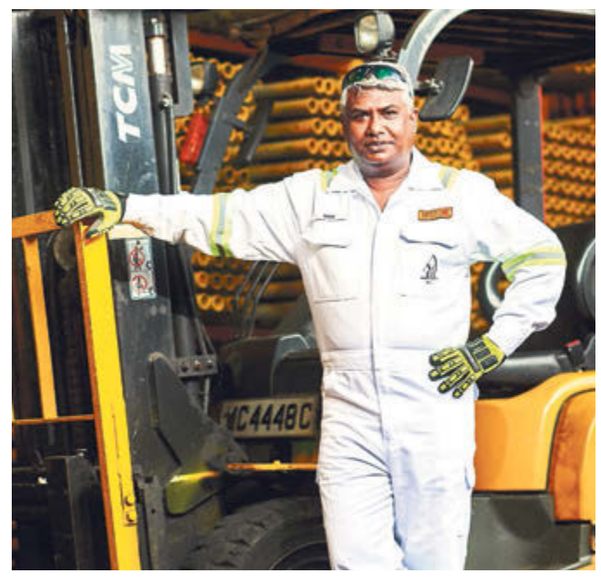


PHOTO: TED CHEN

"We also innovated our work processes and brought in engineering control to eliminate falling hazards.

Involving people and technology

In Wee Chwee Huat, "zero incidents" is to be everyone's personal goal and not just a corporate safety programme slogan.

To do this, the company consulted its workforce when developing its safety procedures and encourages its staff to provide continuous feedback.

"Our staff members have cultivated a mindset that safety is more than just preventing injuries. To them, it is more of a lifestyle, habit and behaviour," says Mr Manimaran.

The company also leverages modern technology to monitor WSH.

"We use the i-safe online software that helps us identify new hazards and risks related to work activities based on the knowledge shared among supervisors working on different sites.

"We have also created various groups in WhatsApp according to the needs of our WSH, so our staff can constantly update one another and the management on the safety processes," he adds.

sweetspot
Partner Content

PHOTO: TED CHEN

Progressive Builders' comprehensive and holistic safety culture balances quality, good safety records and cost efficiency

Safe and sound

BY RACHEL TAN

Does lower costs necessarily mean having to cut corners, thus compromising safety standards? Construction company Progressive Builders proves otherwise.

Its prefabricated caisson — a watertight structure that keeps the underground working environment dry — was awarded the Workplace Safety and Health Innovation Bronze Award last year. It not only cuts costs, but also improves workplace safety and health for its workforce.

"Having the caisson fabricated off-site allows us to install it on-site in a shorter period and greatly reduce the workers' risk exposures while saving labour costs," says Mr Ng Yek Meng (above), 55, managing director of Progressive Builders.

Prefabricating the caisson reduces the risk of welding electrocution and working at height for the beams and joints that hold it together. Fatigue and heat stress is also reduced by about 60 per cent.

"For us, safety is the number one priority for all deliverables. All projects should be completed with good safety records, good quality and in a timely manner for our clients," explains Mr Ng.

Progressive Builders won its first bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award this year.

First incorporated in 1973, the company has maintained good safety records for over 40 years. Its main business activities are to provide project management and construction services for both public and private construction projects.

Progressive Builders' three-tower housing project at Sky Parc (Dawson C5) and park connector project Round Island Route Phase 1A were both awarded the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents Health and Safety Gold Achievement Award in 2018.

Progressive Builders' Safety Management System comprises daily risk assessments and on-site briefings, in-house training and regular internal safety audits, as well as independent audits conducted once every six months by external safety consultants to improve existing safety management system and practices.

The company's safety culture also involves digital transformation. For example, its engineers will conduct computer simulations of the construction sequences using Building Information Modelling and Virtual Design and Construction to identify potential major hazards before the project and either eradicate them or take extra safety precautions on-site to minimise the risk.

Another example is the use of mobile CCTVs mounted on robotic cars during the park connector project to inspect confined spaces in the sewer pipe lines. This eliminates their workers' exposure to harmful sewer gases.

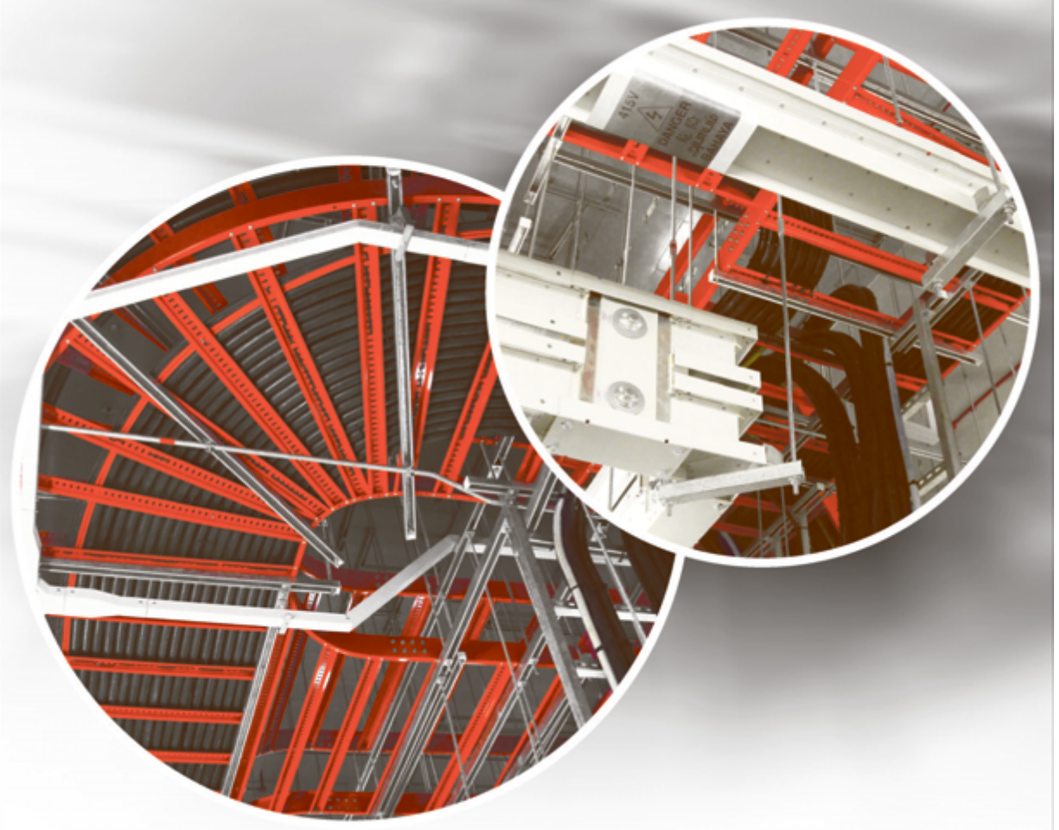
Since 2018, the company has also signed up for SME Health+, a workplace health programme initiative by the Health Promotion Board.

Says Mr Ng: "We don't compromise safety for work progress. If our workforce is healthy, it also creates a safe and healthy work environment."

BETTER WORKPLACE
Tripartite Alliance Award 2018
ENTERPRISE
Singapore HEALTH Award
bizSAFE STAR
SOCOTEC

DLE M&E Pte. Ltd.

DLE M&E Pte Ltd is honoured to be awarded the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award. Together with our valued partners, we are committed to creating a safe and healthy work environment for our employees and associates.



Congratulations from

AMCROTECH PTE LTD
雙機械(私人)有限公司 DLM Pte. Ltd.
雄風冷氣工程私人有限公司 HOONG FUNG ENGINEERING PTE LTD
MECHFIRE
利高工程私人有限公司 RICO ENGINEERING WORKS PTE LTD
CHEANG & LEE SANITARY PLUMBING PTE LTD
UNITED PLUMBING PTE LTD
BARCOL-AIR ENGINEERING PTE. LTD.

Address: 2 Kaki Bukit View, #05-00, Kaki Bukit Techpark II, Singapore 415942 I T 6747 8633 F 6748 1183 I E admin@dle.com.sg W www.dle.com.sg

Address
No. 2, Gul St 2,
Off Gul Circle, Jurong,
Singapore 629287

Tel
+65 6861 5711 (6 Lines)

Fax
+65 6861 9627

Email
sixtysix@singnet.com.sg

Website
www.sixtysix.com.sg

TOTAL INTEGRATED ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS PROVIDER

Sixty-Six Switchgears Co. Pte Ltd
is honoured to be awarded the
bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award 2019
& bizSAFE Champion Award 2019

SIXTY SIX SWITCHGEARS
SIXTY SIX SWITCHGEARS CO PTE LTD

bizSAFE STAR

sweetspot Partner Content

Howard How (left), EHS director at Boustead Projects, believes in the company's responsibility as a bizSAFE mentor.
PHOTO: TED CHEN

Safety first and foremost

As one of only nine bizSAFE mentors, Boustead Projects advocates workplace safety and health through various schemes

Boustead Projects E&C Pte Ltd — a wholly-owned design-and-build subsidiary of industrial real estate solutions provider is one of only nine bizSAFE mentors in Singapore.

To qualify as a bizSAFE mentor, an organisation must have excellent safety records and receive Workplace Safety and Health (WSHP) Awards Performance for three consecutive years.

Mr Howard How, environment, health and safety (EHS) director at Boustead Projects, explains how the company puts safety first.

What responsibility does Boustead Projects have as one of only nine bizSAFE mentors?

Being a bizSAFE Mentor, it gives us tremendous responsibility to steer our subcontractors to a much higher level of workplace safety and health standards by providing them with training, regular site meetings and discussions on safety control measures.

We advise and train all our subcontractors to implement safe work methods that comply with regulatory requirements and ensure proper risk assessment is in place before hazardous work is undertaken.

We hope our efforts will help raise the overall safety standards of subcontractors across the construction industry. By mentoring all our subcontractors, we hope to build a successful safety culture in our company and at the same time develop passionate, committed and competent personnel who genuinely want to instil a strong safety culture.

What is the WSHC Safety Advocate Programme?

It is a voluntary programme where companies of any size can adopt in-house personnel to create support for WSH across all levels of the company. The company identifies suitable employees and empowers them to engage their peers to improve WSH in their company. These WSH advocates can be anyone who devotes extra effort to keep their work environment safe and healthy.

Through a lead-by-example approach at all levels within the organisation, a positive WSH mindset can be realised. Over time, everyone at the workplace should become a WSH advocate.

What plans does Boustead Projects have in place for the future to further workplace safety?

We believe training helps ensure that our workers are sufficiently competent to work safely, and we plan to set up a training centre in the near future to enhance our workplace safety and health advocacy.

We continually improve our management system by implementing programmes to eliminate hand injury, eye injury and other hazardous activities that may have resulted in near misses or actual injuries in the past. We also strive to learn from past accidents and come up with measures to try to prevent accidents from recurring.

Megastone's management team is responsible for upholding its impeccable safety record.
PHOTO: TED CHEN

Small actions, big payoff

At Megastone Holdings, attention to every safety detail has resulted in an enviable track record

BY LUKE TAN

Does picking up your workers from somewhere other than their designated pick-up point sound like a potential safety issue?

Most companies might not bat an eyelid — but not Megastone Holdings.

Its director Mr Chua Chian Hong, 67, recalls how a staff member recently spotted a company driver taking a shortcut to pick up workers at the driveway entrance of their dormitory, instead of at the designated pick-up area located further away.

"Foreign-worker dormitories can be busy places," he explains. "When workers board vehicles at non-designated areas, mishaps can occur. In this instance, we cautioned the driver and helped him to understand the severity of the issue."

Mr Chua believes that this is testament to Megastone's belief in taking personal ownership of even seemingly minor safety issues.

"Everyone has a part — no matter how small — to play in achieving a zero-accident work culture here," he adds.

Rock-solid record

Established in 1995, Megastone Holdings constructs and maintains civil engineering and infrastructure facilities.

After joining the Singapore SME 1000 ranks in 2012, the company added another accolade to its list of achievements this year. It scored a repeat win of the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award, after winning it last year.

Megastone also regularly clinches safety awards given out by the Land Transport Authority and Changi Airport Group. In fact, it has won the latter's Safety Recognition award for five years in a row since 2015.

Stars in the team

The company's success also extends to its employees, including Mr Vikneshwaran Sammandan. The WSH officer received a bizSAFE Champion Award for playing a key role in WSH efforts and the implementation of the bizSAFE programme in his company.

"These awards are a recognition of our safety efforts, and indicate that we are aligned to the best WSH standard," he says.

Megastone has made it a point to involve employees such as Mr Vikneshwaran in various local safety seminars and forums, where they have helped the company to share its domain knowledge.

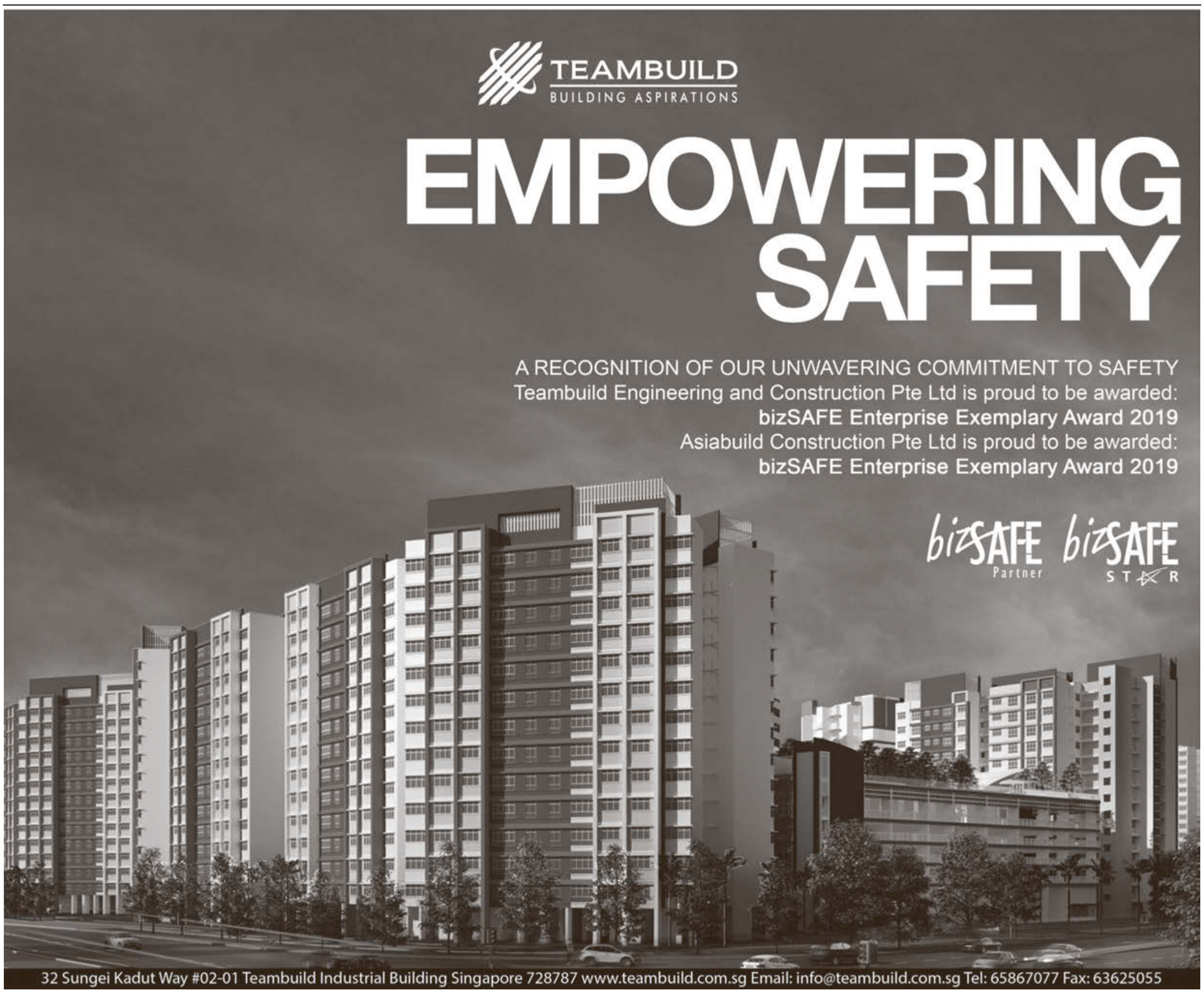
The 35-year-old says: "We work as a team, and these awards will spur all of us to do better in our journey towards a safer workplace."

Looking into the details

Besides nipping safety issues in the bud, the company also focuses on its employees' health and wellness.

Staff can go for medical check-ups, have access to badminton courts and enjoy a bi-monthly "fruit day". A Quality, Safety, and Environment (QSE) app helps to reduce time spent on safety inspections and paperwork.

As Mr Seah Kok Hua, 57, the senior manager overseeing Megastone's total workplace safety and health, puts it: "Our safety, health, and wellness efforts and programmes are there to ensure that employees have a safe and secure environment to work in."



高技工程私营有限公司
WELLTECH CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD

WE BELIEVE IN...

Quality is what we pursue, we are committed to on time delivery to all customers with best quality and progress of building projects undertaken; thus providing high value-added services in terms of quality and cost to our customers.

OUR CORE VALUE

Integrity
Uncompromising honesty, fairness, dedication and accountability in our works.

Service Excellence
Mark and staying ahead of the curve, establish new benchmarks, exceeding expectations and building trust to keep our customers' returning.

Continual Perseverance
We exercise the highest level of professional ethics and approaches for each project with energy, experience and flexibility and always works towards the attainment of a win-win environment.

SOCOTEC ISO 9001:2015 Cert. No:TS33TQ | SOCOTEC ISO 14001:2015 Cert. No:TS33E | SOCOTEC ISO 18001:2007 Cert. No:TS33TO | bizSAFE Partner | bizSAFE STAR | Green and Rackous Builder Excellent

162 Race Course Road Singapore 218603 Tel: 6299 2858 Fax: 6299 2821 Email: mainoffice@welltech.com.sg

ZHENG KENG

ZHENG KENG *is proud to be awarded the* bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award 2019

WE GO ABOVE AND BEYOND FOR SAFETY

As a home grown construction company, we make sure our project sites are a safe place to work in. With more than 40 years of experience, Zheng Keng is proud to have maintained a clean safety track record. We place a strong emphasis on building and sustaining a robust WSH culture with the commitment and involvement of every staff. By continually improving our site safety standards, we ensure our staffs and stakeholders return home safely everyday.

Building on Your Trust Since 1978
20 Senoko Crescent Singapore 758274 | www.zhengkeng.com.sg

2018 R-SPA Gold Award | ENTERPRISE 50 Celebrating Singapore's Enterprising Spirit 2017 | GIC | SAC Accredited Certification Body | bizSAFE STAR

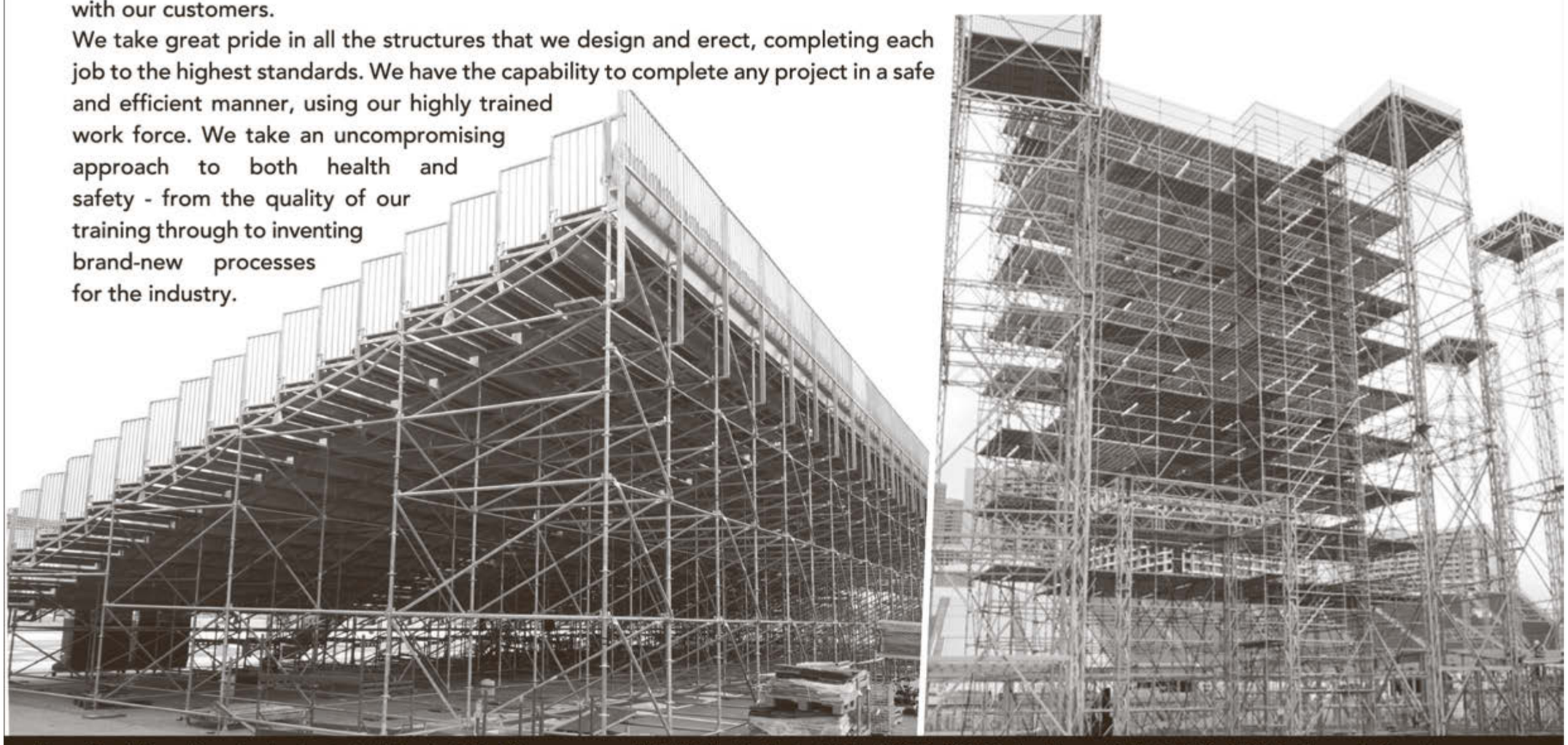
bizSAFE STAR | ISO 9001:2015 | ISO 14001:2015 | ISO 45001:2018 | CULTURESAFE

WEE CHWEE HUAT SCAFFOLDING & CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD

is honoured to be awarded the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary (Gold) Award 2019 & bizSAFE Champion Award 2019

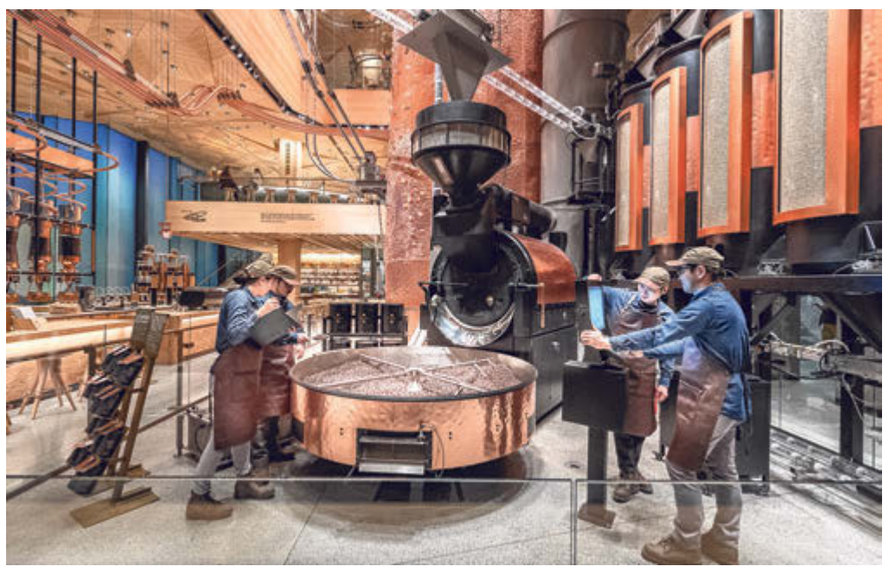
We provide an extensive range of scaffolding services on a regular basis, always meeting the needs of our valuable clients. We believe that scaffolding is not simply about erecting work platforms, but building and maintaining safe working environments making use of quality products and following safety practices. We generate excellent knowledge in all areas and markets. We are happy to share this know-how with our customers.

We take great pride in all the structures that we design and erect, completing each job to the highest standards. We have the capability to complete any project in a safe and efficient manner, using our highly trained work force. We take an uncompromising approach to both health and safety - from the quality of our training through to inventing brand-new processes for the industry.



No.68, Woodlands Industrial Park E9, Singapore 757835 | Tel: (65) 6899 8899 | Fax: (65) 6788 8989 | wch@wch.com.sg

Starbucks opens largest Reserve Roastery in Tokyo



Spanning four storeys, the outlet in Nakameguro neighbourhood will also be home to Starbucks' first cocktail bar in Japan

Walter Sim
In Tokyo

Starbucks opens its largest store in the world today – its fifth Reserve Roastery – in Tokyo's trendy Nakameguro neighbourhood.

The expansive four-storey outlet, which at 32,000 sq ft overtakes the Shanghai Reserve Roastery in size, features the coffee chain's largest Teavana tea bar and its first dedicated community space for events featuring thought leaders.

It promises an upmarket experience with a menu of premium coffees, teas and cocktails, and is designed by renowned Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, who is behind Tokyo's new National Stadium that will take centre stage when the city hosts the Olympic Games next year.

Mr Takafumi Minaguchi, chief executive officer of Starbucks Japan, said: "The Roastery signifies our commitment to fostering moments of human connection over a cup of coffee and using these moments to create positive social impact in the communities we serve."

Located next to the famous Meguro River that is lined with sakura cherry blossom trees, the store showcases the skills of home-grown craftsmen – including an origami-inspired wooden-tiled ceiling – through materials such as light-tone wood from sustainable Japanese forests.

Japan was where the Seattle-based coffee chain opened its first store outside North America, in the tony district of Ginza in August 1996. Today, there are 1,400 stores across all 47 prefectures in the country, hiring more than 37,000 employees.

The other four Starbucks Reserve Roasteries are in Milan, New York, Seattle and Shanghai.

Starbucks Reserve Roastery Tokyo, in the near future, will become the coffee chain's first certified Specialty Coffee Association location, offering training for coffee professionals.

It is expected to roast more than 680,000kg of coffee a year for the Japanese market, which adds up to an average of 31 burlap bags of 60kg each that are packaged on-site every day.

And then there are the food tie-ups, including one with Fukusaya Castella, Japan's oldest castella bakery that first opened its doors in Nagasaki in 1624, to produce a Tokyo Roastery-branded cake set.

And in another first, the store is home to Starbucks' first cocktail bar in Japan, featuring drinks such as the Nakameguro Espresso Martini that is mixed with chestnut liqueur, creme de cacao and espresso.

When customers enter the Roastery, with its airy, open-floor plan, they will be greeted by the world's largest Starbucks Roastery coffee cask – a four-storey, 17m-tall vessel made of blush-tinted copper where coffee beans are left to rest after the roasting process.

The cask was built using the Japanese technique of tsuchime – a traditional method of copper-beating to create its texture and pattern.

It is adorned with hundreds of hand-crafted copper cherry blossoms, which change hues with the light throughout the day.

waltsim@sph.com.sg

• Starbucks Reserve Roastery Tokyo is at 2-19-23 Aobadai, Meguro-ku, Tokyo.

More than 680,000kg of coffee a year is expected to be roasted at the Starbucks Reserve Roastery (above and top), which has an origami-inspired wooden-tiled ceiling to celebrate Japanese craftsmanship. PHOTOS: MATTHEW GLAC FOR STARBUCKS JAPAN

Exclusively for subscribers of The Straits Times

ST subscribers will get to tour Eden Hall, the residence of the British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman, on March 23 as part of Trafalgar's exclusive Be My Guest event.

There will also be a special reading by Mr Wightman from the book, 200 Years Of Singapore And The United Kingdom, co-edited by him and Professor Tommy Koh, followed by a presentation on the sustainable ways of travel in Britain.

The Be My Guest programme takes travellers on guided holidays to Europe and Britain and connects them with the locals.

How to win places for Be My Guest at Eden Hall on March 23, 10am

1. Download the SPH Rewards app.
2. Look out for the giveaway in the Rewards section.
3. Save the deal to your e-wallet.
4. Press the JOIN button on the top right and complete the sentence in no more than 100 words:

I want to visit Eden Hall to find out more about the Singapore-UK bicentennial ties because...

There are 20 pairs of passes to be won. Contest ends on March 8. Terms and conditions apply.

sph rewards

ST news with benefits

THE STRAITS TIMES
WE'VE GOT SINGAPORE COVERED

Subscribe now at stsub.sg or call 6388-3838

Faced with the force of love, Star Wars' female characters shed power and clothes

NEW YORK • Heroines in the Star Wars science-fiction movies dress more skimpily and grow more helpless under the force of love, according to a study released on Tuesday showing two of the strong female leads lose power when romance strikes.

Star Wars characters Padme Amidala and Princess Leia typically wear stately robes and ornate dresses when protecting empires, but shed those clothes when they fall in love, according to researchers at Florida State University.

The two characters, played by Natalie Portman and Carrie Fisher, are among the most popular and best known in a Star Wars franchise, created by George Lucas, that has grossed more than US$9 billion (S$12.1 billion).

A new film, Star Wars: Episode IX, is due in theatres this year.

The movies show the two famous female characters wielding less power as the plots delve into romance, the research found.

Star Wars: Episode IV, A New Hope's (from far left) Luke Skywalker (played by Mark Hamill), Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford). PHOTO: LUCASFILM

The criticism comes in the midst of the #MeToo movement that was triggered by women in Hollywood calling out sexual abuse and harassment. It has spread into widespread demands ranging from equal pay to better jobs to less demeaning roles for women.

In movies and in the real world, women do not need to cede control just because they become romantically involved, Ms Mary King, co-author of the study published in the international journal Fashion And Textiles, told Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"Film-makers can show women as leaders and romantic partners simultaneously," she said. "We don't have to be one or the other.

"We've seen some improvement, but there is so much more that can be done."

Heroine Amidala is first portrayed fully clad in ornate dresses, making decisions and wielding authority as a 14-year-old queen, the research said.

But when she declares her love for Anakin, the future Darth Vader, she turns up in a skin-tight jumpsuit bearing her midriff and needs his help in battle.

Princess Leia is introduced in a loosely fitted white gown, leading a rebellion, but is arguably best known for the iconic metal bikini she wears when she is a slave stripped of all power, the research said.

The research looked at the two characters in 118 scenes in six films in 34 different costumes.

"How groups of people, in this case women, are being presented to an audience should be done with care," Ms King said. "Sure, give us the gorgeous costumes, but don't diminish our roles just because we wear them." REUTERS

Comics

BABY BLUES

GARFIELD

Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
10.00 The $100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Bondi Harvest With Guy Turland (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 5 (SC)
2.30 On The Red Dot – Risky Business (CA)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)
4.00 Rojak (PG) (SC)
4.30 Survivor 37 (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 The $100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
7.30 World's Funniest Videos: Top 10 Countdown 2 (PG) (V)
8.00 The Noise (V) (Season Premiere)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 With Highlights From Parliament
9.45 Talking Point 2018 (HD) (CA)
10.15 The Resident (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.10 NCIS 15 (PG13) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Lion Moms (PG13) (D)
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.20 Hawaii Five-0 7 (PG) (D)
3.10 Lethal Weapon (PG13) (D)
4.10 Bondi Harvest With Guy Turland (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 Golden Age Talentime (CC) (V)
7.00 Food Map (IE)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (News)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Garden Of Treasures 3 (CC) (IE)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)
1.00 News 8 At One
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Little Counsellor (S)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 Golden Melody (V)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 When Duty Calls (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (CA)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Fun With SINGnese (CC) (IE)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight
10.45 Focus (CC) (CA)
11.15 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.15 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.15 Taste The World (IE)
2.15 Fiery Passion (Drama)
4.10 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Unique Lodging (CC) (IE)
4.00 The Food Detectives 2 (IE)
4.30 Big Big World 3 (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Goblin (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 World Food (CC) (IE) (Finale)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.45 World Food (CC) (IE) (Finale)
AM
12.40 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.35 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 When We Play
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Champions For Change
2.00 News Now
4.02 When We Play
5.00 News Now
7.02 Champions For Change
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Insight
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Champions For Change
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 India's Game Changers
1.02 Insight
2.00 News Now
2.30 Asia Exposed 2
3.02 When We Play
4.00 News Now
4.30 India's Game Changers
5.02 Insight

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Anjaraipetti 5 (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Vasantham Express 5 (IE)
5.30 Mighty Raju Animation Series (S)
6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (PG) (D) (Hindi)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru (CC) (Cul)
7.30 Merdeka Generation – Hands That Shaped The Nation (IE)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Kanavu Meipada 2 (CC) (IE)
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (CC) (D)
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Maalai Maalai Vasantham (V)
11.30 Ethiroli 15 (HD) (CC) (CA)
AM
12.00 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
12.30 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Justin Time (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 HSBC Women's World Championship 2019 (Sports) (Live)
PM
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (S)
4.30 Shutterbugs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Alvinnn!!! & The Chipmunks (S)
6.00 Transformers Rescue Bots (S)
6.30 Exlosers 2 (D)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (CC) (S)
7.30 Miraculous: Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir (CC) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (CC) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 Laureus World Sports Awards Monaco 2019 (Sports)
11.30 Battle Of The Network Stars (Sports)
AM
12.15 Close

SURIA

PM
4.00 Bibik-Bibikku (PG) (D)
5.00 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Supa Strikas (S)
6.30 Masak-Masak Ringan (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (News)
8.30 Sentuhan Harapan (PG) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Kultus (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Bingit 2 (PG) (D)
11.30 Berita (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singteltv.com.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.30 Swamp People 9
9.30 Ancient Aliens 10
10.25 History Drama: Project Blue Book
PM
12.15 Genius
1.10 Swamp People 9
2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Storage Wars: Texas 6
3.00 Storage Wars 11
3.30 History Drama: Project Blue Book
5.20 Hunting Hitler 2
6.15 Swamp People 9
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 Storage Wars 11
9.00 Forged In Fire 5
9.55 Forged In Fire: Knife Or Death 2
10.50 History Drama: Knightfall
11.45 Genius

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Growing Up Supermodel
11.00 Up! Pretty
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 His Perfect Obsession
3.35 Married At First Sight Australia 4
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Top Chef Jr
7.00 This Time Next Year
8.00 Born This Way 2
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 The Wrong Man
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
7.35 Just Like Heaven (PG)
9.10 The Talented Mr. Ripley (PG)
11.25 Payback (PG)
PM
1.00 Pitch Perfect 3 (NC16)
2.30 True Detective 3 (NC16)
3.45 Hugo (PG)
5.50 Toy Story 3 (PG)
7.30 Braven (NC16)
9.00 Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen (PG)
11.25 Crashing 3 (NC16)
11.55 High Maintenance 3 (M18)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
7.45 John Grisham's The Rainmaker
9.55 The HBO Movie Show
10.25 The General's Daughter (NC16)
PM
12.20 The Brits Are Coming! (NC16)
1.55 The Untouchables
4.00 Back To The Future 3
6.00 Blast From The Past
7.55 Lethal Weapon 4
10.00 Strike Back 6 (NC16)
11.00 The Bad Seed (2018) (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Chinese Restaurant 2 (HD)
PM
12.15 Still Loving You (HD)
1.30 Chicago Typewriter (HD)
2.45 Back To Youth (HD)
4.15 In Search Of Artificial Intelligence (HD)
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)
6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Super Boys 2 (HD)
9.30 Fun Abroad (HD)
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
6.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Abierto Mexicano Telcel Presentado Por HSBC 2019: Day 3 (Last 16)
PM
2.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2019
3.00 Tennis: 2019 Davis Cup Madrid Finals Draw Ceremony
4.00 Table Tennis: Seamaster 2019 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Men's Semi-finals
6.00 Tennis: Deuce 2019
6.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019
7.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships 2019: Day 4 Quarter-finals

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.02 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Macau Black Bears Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors
9.00 Magazine: Trans World Sport 2019
10.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Macau Black Bears Vs San Miguel Alab Pilipinas (Same Day Delay)
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 CLS Knights Indonesia Vs Singapore Slingers
2.30 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)
4.45 National Basketball League Semi-finals Melbourne United Vs Sydney Kings (Live)
6.45 Fiba World Basketball 2019
7.15 National Basketball League Semi-finals Perth Wildcats Vs Brisbane Bullets (Live)
9.15 Fiba World Basketball 2019
9.30 Magazine: Omnisport. TV
10.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernoobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
3.00 Rat-A-Tat
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Craig Of The Creek
6.00 Ben 10
6.30 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
7.55 The Heroic Quest Of The Valiant Prince Ivandoe
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Hawaii Five-0 7
6.50 Seal Team
7.40 American Ninja Warrior 7
9.25 Hawaii Five-0 7
10.20 Seal Team
11.10 Taken
PM
1.00 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
1.55 American Ninja Warrior 7
2.50 Hawaii Five-0 7
3.40 Seal Team
4.30 Taken
6.10 Seal Team 2
7.05 Asia's Got Talent 3
9.55 MacGyver 3
10.50 Asia's Got Talent 3

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 Blindspot 3
6.45 Major Crimes 5
7.35 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow 3
8.20 Person Of Interest 4
9.10 The Flash 4
9.55 Blindspot 3
10.45 Almost Genius
11.35 Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows Part 1
PM
2.15 Blindspot 3
3.05 Almost Genius
3.55 The Flash 4
4.40 Person Of Interest 4
5.30 Major Crimes 5
6.20 The Flash 4
7.10 The Lego Movie
9.00 Whiskey Cavalier
9.50 Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows Part 2

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.55 Just For Laughs Gags 14
7.20 Mr Bean
7.50 Most Ridiculous 2
8.15 Amazingness
8.40 Mr Bean
9.10 Caraoke Showdown
9.35 Just For Laughs Gags 14
10.00 Hot In Cleveland 3
10.50 Mr Bean
11.20 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.10 The Daily Show 24
12.35 The Goldbergs 5
1.25 Hot In Cleveland 6
2.15 Saturday Night Live 43
3.05 Dr Ken
3.35 Just Another Immigrant: Romesh Ranganathan
4.05 Ronny Chieng: International Student
4.35 The Goldbergs 5
5.25 Hot In Cleveland 6
6.15 The Daily Show 24
6.40 Your Face Or Mine 3
7.10 Above Average Presents
7.15 Amazingness
7.40 Billy On The Street 4
7.55 Most Ridiculous 2
8.45 The Goldbergs 4
9.35 Hot In Cleveland 6
10.25 Inside Amy Schumer 2
10.50 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Taste Of Love
7.00 The Destiny Of White Snake
8.00 King Of Blaze
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 The Destiny Of White Snake
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 King Of Blaze
5.00 The Destiny Of White Snake
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 The Destiny Of White Snake
10.00 King Of Blaze
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
Your energy is just right for making big leaps and getting others to do the same.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
People are ready to hear your words of wisdom and you may find that you can get the wind at your back.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Try new things to make a difference. You can figure out how it will all work out when you give it a go.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Your sense of balance is disturbed. Deal with a person who is off-putting or ease up on a new activity.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
Help someone who is going through something really big. It will mean the world to him.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
Your love life could use a boost. Make a move – it is a good time to move closer to someone you like.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
Your ability to manage authority figures is waning, so deal only with those who are able to listen to reason.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
Someone is in a good mood and may help you get your way on a project you had nearly abandoned.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
It makes financial sense to save for later in life or even just for a rainy day. You will not regret it.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
Your energy levels never seem to lag and you should get much done in 24 hours.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
You are feeling more energetic, so find new ways to amuse yourself and boost your own morale.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
Someone you hardly know offers a helping hand and it comes with long-lasting consequences.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Weekdays With Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Weekdays With Charmaine Yee
4.00 On The Drive Home With Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 Glenn & The Flying Dutchman
10.00 The Midday Brew With Charmaine Phua
PM
1.00 Afternoon Tune Up With Cheryl Miles
4.00 The Weekday Getaway With Divian Nair
8.00 Love Songs With Simon Lim

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker & Finance Presenter Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.15am/7.20pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 2.11am/2.31pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 5.03am (2.5m), 12.35pm (1m), 8.15pm (2.1m). Desaru: 4.26am (2.3m), 11.54am (1.1m), 7.50pm (2.3m). Port Dickson: 12.54am (1.9m), 7.54am (1.1m), 1.08pm (1.5m), 7.32pm (0.9m). Mersing: 3.34am (2.3m), 10.56am (1.2m), 6.51pm (2.7m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 12.24am (1.9m), 6.28am (2.4m), 2.03pm (0.9m), 9.52pm (2.2m). Desaru: 1.09am (2m), 5.22am (2.2m), 1.09pm (1.1m), 9.30pm (2.4m). Port Dickson: 3.25am (1.8m), 10.34am (1.1m), 3.47pm (1.5m), 10.17pm (0.8m). Mersing: 1.42am (2.1m), 4.20am (2.2m), 11.58am (1.2m), 8.11pm (2.8m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

Seungri to cooperate with police over drug, sex allegations

SEOUL • South Korean singer Seungri has expressed his willingness yesterday to fully cooperate with the police investigation into the allegations surrounding him – ranging from drugs to brokering prostitution.

"Seungri has told us he is truly sorry to everyone for all the issues that had been caused by him in the past month, and said he wishes to appear before the investigators as soon as possible to take drug tests and other related measures needed in the investigation," his management agency, YG Entertainment, said in an official statement.

The agency said it agreed with him and vowed to contact the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency's special crime unit to deliver his message.

The 28-year-old megastar from K-pop group BigBang has had myriad accusations raised against him in the past month, which were triggered by a report of a customer being assaulted at the Burning Sun nightclub in Gangnam in Seoul. The singer was an executive director at the time of the alleged assault.

Some of the allegations that have been raised include the use of date-rape drugs at the club and the recent revelation that Seungri may have ordered his employees to procure sexual favours for his investors.

YG has denied that Seungri used drugs, although it did not comment on drug use by others in the club.

The agency says the accusation of sexual bribery is entirely false, claiming that the text messages that appeared in a recent media report have been fabricated.

In 2014, Seungri made headlines by crashing his Porsche into a Mercedes-Benz, injuring the driver of the Mercedes and himself along with damage to both vehicles. It happened four years after his bandmate Daesung caused a car crash that resulted in a person's death.

Other members of the boyband have also made headlines.

In 2017, T.O.P was given a suspended jail term for marijuana use. He was stripped of his status as a conscripted policeman after the sentence.

G-Dragon, the leader and the most popular member of the group, was found to have smoked marijuana in a police investigation that took place after an anonymous tip-off. The artist claimed to have mistaken the drug for a cigarette, and the investigators closed the case with a suspension of indictment.

THE KOREA HERALD/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

On social media

ENEMIES NO MORE?: Have Queen of Pop Madonna and newly minted Oscar winner Lady Gaga (both left) buried their hatchet and ended their longstanding feud?

It appears to be so, judging from the photo shared on Time's official Instagram feed and a similar photo shared later by Madonna on her Twitter and Instagram accounts.

The photo was taken at Madonna's post-Academy Awards party on Sunday. Gaga won the Oscar for Best Original Song for co-writing the song Shallow for the movie A Star Is Born, which she starred in with Bradley Cooper.

The rumoured feud between Madonna and Gaga began eight years ago, after Madonna claimed similarities between her 1989 song Express Yourself and Gaga's Born This Way, which was released in 2011.

Gaga has denied ripping off Madonna's work.

PHOTO: MADONNA/TWITTER

Emma Thompson letter explains why she backed out of movie

NEW YORK • Last month, Skydance Animation raised many eyebrows when it announced that Mr John Lasseter – one of the most influential figures in the animation field and a co-founder of Pixar – would become its new head.

After all, Mr Lasseter had left The Walt Disney last year following employee complaints about unwanted touching.

But reaction in some corners went beyond a raised eyebrow. Actress Emma Thompson, the two-time Oscar winner who had previously worked on the Pixar film Brave (2012) with Mr Lasseter, wanted out of a Skydance project.

Last week, The Hollywood Reporter, citing anonymous sources, reported that Thompson had backed out of a voice part in Luck, a Skydance movie with Alessandro Carloni attached to direct, because of concerns about working on a project for a studio run by Mr Lasseter.

Thompson had actually left the project, it turns out, on Jan 20 – 11 days after Mr Lasseter's hiring was officially announced. Three days later, she sent a scathing letter to Skydance, detailing her decision to leave, that was published on Tuesday by the Los Angeles Times.

A representative for Thompson confirmed its contents.

"It feels very odd to me that you and your company would consider hiring someone with Mr Lasseter's pattern of misconduct given the present climate in which people with the kind of power that you have can reasonably be expected to step up to the plate," Thompson wrote.

She said she realised the situation was "complicated" and called Carloni, the director, "wonderful", but nonetheless excoriated Skydance.

"If a man has been touching women inappropriately for decades, why would a woman want to work for him if the only reason he's not touching them inappropriately now is that it says in his contract that he must behave 'professionally'?" Thompson said in the letter.

It continued: "If a man has made women at his companies feel undervalued and disrespected for decades, why should the women at his new company think that any respect he shows them is anything other than an act that he's required to perform by his coach, his therapist and his employment agreement? The message seems to be, 'I am learning to feel respect for women so please be patient while I work on it. It's not easy.'"

Britain-born Thompson is an accomplished figure in Hollywood, with a career stretching back to the early 1980s.

She voiced the part of Elinor in Brave, a Pixar production that Mr Lasseter executive-produced. The movie won praise from critics partly for being the first Pixar movie to have a female protagonist. NYTIMES

In short

Despacito sets YouTube record

The mega-hit Despacito by Puerto Rican singer Luis Fonsi has become the most watched video ever on YouTube with more than six billion views, said the Google-owned service on Tuesday.

Shakira accused of tax evasion

Colombian singer Shakira has been called to appear in a Spanish court on June 12 to face accusations of failing to pay €14.5 million (S$22.3 million) in tax, the court in the Catalonia region said on Tuesday.

Talk Talk lead singer dies

Mark Hollis, lead singer and main songwriter of 1980s pop band Talk Talk, has died age 64, his ex-manager said on Tuesday.

Eligible for SkillsFuture credits

THE STRAITS TIMES
ENGLISH MASTERCLASS
The Executive Edition Special: Creative Writing

Who should attend
- Aspiring writers who want to pen their first book
- Communications executives who have to write newsletters and corporate reports
- Those who want to write good stories in general

Participants can use their SkillsFuture credits to enrol in the one-day course which covers the following essentials of creative writing:
- Basics of narrative writing
- Generating story ideas
- Creating characters
- Plots, twists and endings
- Turning life experience into stories
- The publishing process

STskills

Dates: March 20, April 11 (1-day course)
Time: 10am to 6pm (including lunch and tea breaks)
Venue: Level 8 Tower Block, SPH News Centre, 1000 Toa Payoh North
Fee: $499 a person

6319-5076
STmasterclass@sph.com.sg
Sign up now at stskills.sg

ST news with benefits

The Writing Coach
Felix Cheong has published 13 books across different genres, from poetry to short stories. A recipient of the Young Artist award, he has worked in the media industry for more than 20 years. He holds a master's degree in creative writing and currently teaches journalism at the University of Newcastle and Murdoch University.

THE STRAITS TIMES
WE'VE GOT SINGAPORE COVERED
Subscribe now at stsub.sg or call 6388-3838

Published and printed by Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Co. Regn. No. 198402868E.

A member of Audit Bureau of Circulations Singapore. Customer Service (Circulation): 6388-3838, circs@sph.com.sg, Fax 6746-1925.